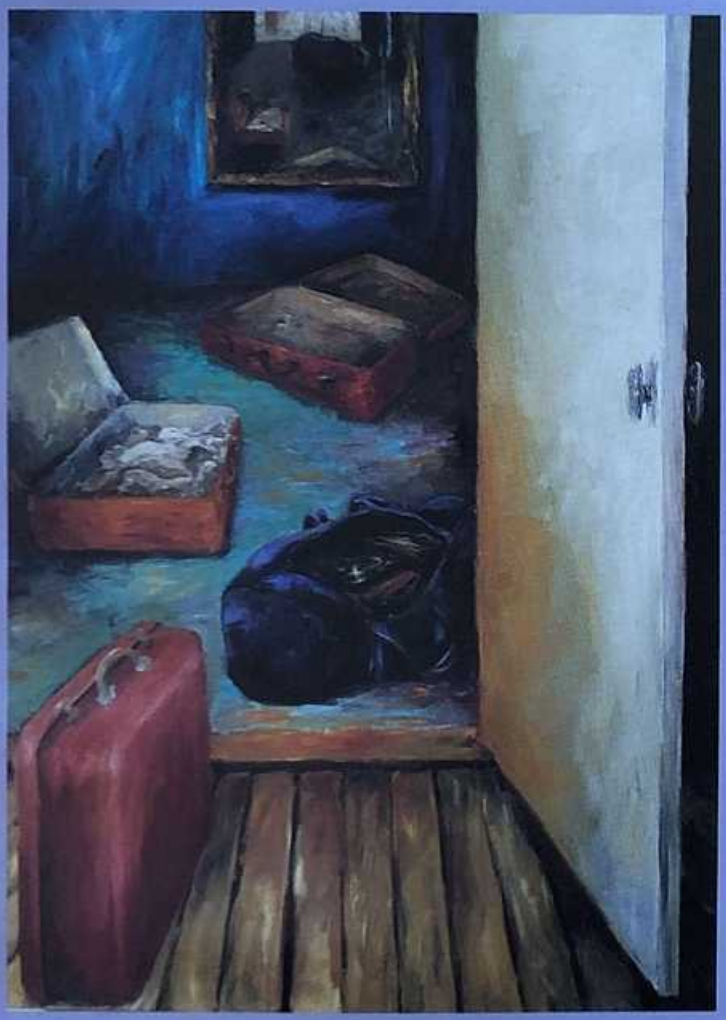
(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

# TIKKUN

**Current Debate on Abortion:** *Carole Joffe & Ruth Anna Putnam*
**Fiction:** *Jay Neugeboren*
**Poetry:** *Rachel Tzvia Back, Marge Piercy & Enid Shomer*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1989 $5.00



**SPECIAL FEATURE:**

## THE PATHOLOGY OF THE OCCUPATION

*Human Rights on the West Bank*
**Avigdor Feldman, M. K. Dedi Zucker**

*The Decline of the Labor Party*
**Haim Baram**

*The Politics of Emotion*
**Michael Lerner**

*Leaving Brooklyn, Again*
**Marcie Hershman**

*Hollywood Childhood*
**Leslie Epstein**

*Scratching the Belly of the Beast*
**Betty Mensch & Alan Freeman**

*A Kaddish Journal*
**E. M. Broner**

*The Canon & the Core Curriculum*
**Arnold Eisen, Hannan Hever**

*Blacks & Jews*
**James McPherson**

**PLUS**

*Shana Penn on the Death of Popeye; Robert Gottlieb on Environmentalism and Progressive Politics; Josh Henkin on Political Philosophy: Cogito Ergo So What? Harvey Greenberg on Indiana Jones; Michael Dyson on* Do the Right Thing; *and "For the Sins"—A Contemporary Version for the High Holy Days.*

# The ark of consequence

The classic rainbow shows as an arc,
a bridge strung in thinning clouds,
but I have seen it flash a perfect circle,
rising and falling and rising again
through the octave of colors,
a sun shape rolling like a wheel of light.

Commonly it is a fraction of a circle,
a promise only partial, not a banal
sign of safety like a smile pin,
that rainbow cartoon affixed to vans
and baby carriages. No, it promises
only, this world will not self-destruct.

Account the rainbow a boomerang of liquid
light, foretelling rather that what we
toss out returns in the water table;
flows from the faucet into our bones.
What we shoot up into orbit falls
to earth through the roof one night.

Think of it as a promise that what
we do continues in an arc
of consequence, flickers in our
children's genes, collects in each
spine and liver, gleams in the apple,
coats the down of the drowning auk.

When you see the rainbow iridescence
shiver in the oil slick, smeared
on the waves of the poisoned river,
shudder for the covenant broken, for we
are given only this floating round ark
with the dead moon for company and warning.

—*Marge Piercy*

# TIKKUN

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The drawing on page 21 is by Robert Broner and the drawing on page 39 is by Asaph Ben Menachim.

# TIKKUN

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# Letters

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

## SINGLES

To the Editor:

I am writing to you to ask you to consider publishing a special section devoted to Jewish singles in each issue of *Tikkun*. Besides the obvious topics available for feature articles, some space could be dedicated to personal ads—similar to the *New York Review of Books* and *New York* magazine.

Your readership is unique; *Tikkun* covers areas of concern that no other publication of which I am aware dares to cover, with depth and thoughtfulness. It attracts thinking, caring people who are not afraid to take unconventional stands on ethical and moral issues of Jewish relevance. By creating a singles focus, you would be allowing your readership to select those of like inclinations.

There is a growing number of Jewish singles who are not meeting their appropriate counterparts through traditional methods of social interchange. People are marrying later; relationships are more unstable; people are living longer and becoming widowed; there are a lot of people who are searching, and re-searching, and searching again for their own special person. Bars, introduction services, and temple- and community-sponsored programs leave much to be desired and are not facilitating acceptable matches.

The frustration and disappointment that intelligent Jewish progressive singles of all ages feel when they cannot connect with potential partners (except on a superficial or "meat-market" approach) is extremely high.

The anonymity and feeling of control that personal ads give to people, as well as the social acceptance that has come about in recent years for this way of connecting, leads me to believe this idea is ripe for *Tikkun*.

As you might surmise, I am not a disinterested observer. After many years of happy marriage, I found myself thrust into the singles world again. No one who knows me would dream that I do not often meet eligible single men.

It would indeed be foolish to think that any one avenue of socializing will


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be a panacea, or to think that there are no risks involved, or to think that any one connecting resource will bring forth renaissance man on a silver platter. But *Tikkun* would surely fill a widening social Jewish need if it offered another respectable, imaginative, thoughtful, relatively safe option for people to connect for a long-term, committed, and caring Jewish relationship.

Yael Frimstein
New York, New York

*Michael Lerner responds:*

We would be happy to hear our readers' reactions to these suggestions. We have not run any form of classified ads. Would our readers find this offensive and undignified or a useful service?

## Intersubjective Zap

To the Editor:

As a psychiatrist, I found Peter Gabel's provocative and evocative article on "Dukakis's Defeat and the Transformative Possibilities of Legal Culture" (*Tikkun,* March/April 1989) tellingly accurate and powerful in addressing the mechanisms of the need for, and the denial of the need for, social connection and meaning both in the world of work and in family life. Most of my patients work in Silicon Valley companies—generally as executives or managers. They universally care deeply about social connection and meaning in their jobs. If they can't help develop connection and meaning (and often they discover they really can), they seek out other divisions of the company or other companies where they can. The money doesn't hold them. The social connection and meaning does.

I see Gabel's message confirmed in my work with couples where the core problem is this deep need for recognition and validation by the other.

Imagine what would have happened if Dukakis had articulated a moral vision of the sort Gabel suggests, if Dukakis had defined the context and spoken to our needs for connection and community. The truly powerful leaders always do. TR, FDR, JFK, Churchill did do just that. Otherwise, as Gabel points out, the Democrats seem to be presenting a laundry list of programs with no deeper community or personal appeal.

Edward M. Kovachy, Jr.
Menlo Park, California

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel brilliantly and passionately exposes the alienation of modern social life. I thoroughly agree that people have a basic need for mutual recognition and confirmation that is unrealized in social existence, that we collectively deny alienation by reifying the alienating aspects of social life as objective structures seemingly beyond human control, and that progressive social change demands an evocative and disalienating moral vision of a community whose transcendent social purpose is to make mutual confirmation an achievable reality.

It is important, though, not to be overly reductionist in our analysis of social life. To privilege the subjective and intersubjective aspects of life over the objective and individualistic is also reductionist. Life is neither objective nor subjective, neither atomized nor communal, but all at the same time. There *is* a physical world out there that conditions our subjective interpretations and circumscribes our ability to create the world in accordance with our moral vision of it. There *is* exploitation and oppression which must be overcome if the possibility of intersubjective connection and mutual confirmation is to be realized. And it *is* necessary to analyze the ways in which exploitation and oppression work to some extent to reify its forms, in order to develop a moral vision of a re-formed social order. Analysis necessarily reifies because objectification is to some degree endemic to language and to the very process of conceptualizing. But like Gabel we can and must also use language to dereify our reifications, lest we delude ourselves into thinking that they are fixed and immutable and that we lack the power to change them.

I agree, as Gabel implies, that all too often Marxism has been reduced to a crude determinism which loses sight of human agency and intersubjectivity. But we must also guard against the countertendency to make everything a matter of subjective interpretation. For to do so tends to create the fantasy that alienation is simply a figment of our imagination which we can overcome by willing it away. What we must do, rather, is to actively change the social conditions which produce alienation as both an objective aspect of material life and a subjective aspect of mental life. In short, while we must not overly objectify the world, we must not overly subjectify it either.

Professor Thomas Kleven
Thurgood Marshall School of Law
Houston, Texas

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's article "Dukakis's Defeat and the Transformative Possibilities of Legal Culture" was a brilliant statement of what is new in *Tikkun*'s approach—and also reveals what is weak about your approach.

*Tikkun* avoids the old-fashioned reductionism that sees human beings as motivated by nothing more than economic necessity. Gabel is eloquent when he talks about the way that human beings seek mutual recognition and confirmation that is unrealized in their daily social existence.

But from this correct insight Gabel and *Tikkun* proceed to suggest that the Democratic party and liberal politics should be built around this insight and that this should be the center of their political program. In effect, this means replacing a focus on concrete programs with a focus on building a political party that resembles a church or a therapy community. To my way of thinking, the Democrats are failing not because they are too different from the right wing but because they are too much like it. They really present no program alternatives. If the Democrats were to build on the openings created by Gorbachev—offering dramatic reductions in arms spending and diverting those funds to badly needed social programs—they would recapture the old flame. Dukakis's suggestions for student loans, health care, and child care were moving in the right direction—but they were too timid: they didn't go far enough. But I see no need to raise issues about social connectedness and meaning—they are too abstract and would appeal only to the kinds of intellectuals who already support progressive causes.

And this leads to my second point. There's much to change in the law. As a progressive lawyer myself, I am constantly fighting to change the laws to make them reflect the liberal values that many of us hold. And I defend clients

who are fighting for social change, or clients whose cases allow me to challenge oppressive laws. But Gabel wants something more—he wants us to contest who we are as social beings and how we are constituted as a political community. He wants us to tell the truth about the vision of social life that we are trying to make real as progressive lawyers. Now, this is an admirable goal—but it makes sense only in a law school classroom, not in the actual practice of the law—which is exactly why so many of the people attracted to Gabel's organization, Critical Legal Studies, are law professors and not practicing lawyers.

So get real, *Tikkun*. Get your theory out of the sky and into the reality of daily life in America, where things are far more right-wing than you folks seem to realize. But keep up the good work—I love reading the magazine, and in some funny way it gives me hope that everything I stand for is still possible. There's something to be said for keeping the vision alive.

Howard Levi
New York, New York

*Peter Gabel responds:*

Thomas Kleven and Howard Levi are right to emphasize the objective causes of the pain that people face in American society, and it would certainly be a mistake for *Tikkun* to be calling for an approach to politics that valued social connection and meaning at the expense of concrete programs addressing people's need for health care, child care, jobs, and housing. The last thing we need is to replace the technocratic and narrow policy-oriented thinking of today's liberals and radicals with New Age fantasies about creating community that ignore the real conditions of people's lives.

The point of my article was not to downplay the importance of economic suffering and injustice, but to emphasize that people's social and psychological needs are just as real and "objective" as the need for food, shelter, and medical care. Contrary to the implication in Howard Levi's letter, it is not primarily intellectuals and professors who are in a frenzy about the sanctity of the flag, but working-class people who see it as a symbol of passionate social connection that is otherwise largely lacking in their lives. My claim is that concrete proposals like the call for universal health care, for example, must be framed within a moral vision that embodies the same desire for social connection that the flag embodies—but in a way that could really generate this sense of connection between self and others instead of relegating people to the fantasized community symbolized by the flag.

I do strongly disagree with Levi's defense of conventional nuts-and-bolts law practice. The legal arena should be an important public context in which lawyers and clients argue with passion and moral vision for the creation of a more humane society. As long as progressive lawyers see themselves as technical rule-manipulators fighting for good causes, without understanding how they re-create the very thing they want to change by deferring to existing assumptions about how to act, think, and speak in their role as lawyers, they will never be a real threat to the system of existing power relations. There is real value in the work that Levi and other liberal lawyers perform on behalf of the oppressed, but to make that work socially transformative they must also challenge the ways that the existing legal system narrows (really flattens) the meaning of important social debates and blocks the expression of the desire for mutual confirmation that is at the heart of every vital movement for social change.

## Affirmative Action

To the Editor:

The recent articles on affirmative action and quotas (*Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1989) raised a number of important questions. On the factual level, the writers fail to note that both surveys and official "establishment" Jewish organizations see a difference between affirmative action and quotas, adopting a generally favorable attitude to what the 1987–88 *Joint Program Plan* of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council called "carefully constructed affirmative action programs as a means to remedy past discrimination." While not a major part of the organizational agenda, the 1988–89 *Program Plan* is also critical of the administration's "narrow interpretation of longstanding civil rights policies ... [by] insisting on proof of the intent to discriminate rather than the traditional consideration of the effects of such policies as a measure of discrimination."

The quotation on intent raises serious questions about the response by Josh Henkin. I do not endorse the angry claims by Michael Levin, who handily ignores the gains made by Jewish women under civil rights and affirmative action laws. But the argument in response that discriminatory intent is needed is a weak and essentially insupportable position, as Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch briefly note. Though Henkin is right that merit cannot be equated with a test score, he is mistaken when he urges that we consider the "*purpose* or *aim* of these policies.... [They] do not *aim* to deny Jewish men admission or employment. That is simply the unfortunate but necessary consequence of accepting blacks and women, given the relatively small number of spots available [Henkin's emphases]."

Let me draw a few examples from Jewish experience in America. In correspondence revealed on the front page of the *New York Times* of June 17, 1922, Harvard's President Lowell defended a Jewish quota. As Jewish enrollment approached 20 percent, Lowell justified the quota as a means to reduce anti-Semitism caused by the rising Jewish enrollment. More recently, universities have used "geographic diversity" as a flimsy cloak over quotas against Jews, who tend to live in major urban areas. In 1967, the University of Wisconsin adopted a ten-state "hold" on admissions from states "overrepresented" (states such as New York, New Jersey, Illinois): no additional students from these states would be admitted, while students from other states would be accepted. Henkin's standard of intention would seemingly require that Jews and others concerned with fair admittance not protest if intentions were actually pure, though misguided.

The point of these examples (there are others like them) is that, in general, results matter more than reasons. (See Marian Henriquez Neudel's article "Being 'Only Human' vs. Being a Mensch," *Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988.) It is true the Mishna and other Jewish works place a significant value on *kavana* (intention). Nonetheless, if we consider an example such as Maimonides' well-known eight levels of *tzedaka* (charity), we learn that someone who gives grudgingly or seeking public acclaim has still done a *mitzva,*

even if it is not at the highest level. We must look at the *effects* of policies that restrict access to opportunities by Jews, Blacks, women, and the disabled.

Rabbi Robert P. Tabak
Temple Beth Shalom
Spokane, Washington

*Josh Henkin responds:*

I'm not sure what it means to say that "results matter more than reasons." But if all Rabbi Tabak wishes to argue is that we ought to be concerned about the consequences of our decisions, I'll gladly grant him that.

I'm afraid, however, that Tabak's point doesn't shed much light on the question of affirmative action. Though he dissociates himself from Michael Levin's splenetic outburst, Tabak seems to agree with Levin that, when it comes to affirmative action, there is such a thing as inadvertent discrimination, or "discrimination-in-effect." This I simply don't understand.

Take, for example, a medical school that receives 1000 applications for 300 spots. Any way you slice it, 700 applicants are not going to get in. Those are the "results," plain and simple. The relevant question is *which* three hundred to admit.

Suppose, for the moment, that the decision were based solely on MCAT scores. And suppose, further, that the students who were rejected (those with insufficiently high MCATs) complained that they were discriminated against. What would Tabak say to these jilted applicants? I imagine something like, "Your scores weren't good enough." To which they might respond: "Reasons don't matter; results do."

Well, that claim obviously isn't up to snuff. The mere fact that someone gets rejected by medical school doesn't mean he has been a victim of discrimination.

I'm afraid I confused matters by using the loaded term "intent," despite my carefully worded qualification of the concept. So let me try again. The *reasons* for admitting the particular 300 applicants are all-important. In other words, a student, in order to justifiably holler "discrimination," must prove that she was judged unfairly, that her interests were not treated with concern and respect.

An admissions committee that chooses not to admit a Black applicant because it simply doesn't like Blacks is discriminating against that applicant. But the discrimination has to do with the *reason,* not the *result.* Another Black student, rejected for legitimate reasons, is not a victim of discrimination.

Of course, the appropriate criteria for medical school (or any other) admissions are open to discussion. In fact, that was the main point of my article: we need to abandon our unreflective admissions standards and engage in debate about how to admit doctors who will most benefit society. One—though not the only—thing society needs is more Black and women doctors, lawyers, candlestick makers. That much is hard to debate.

To the Editor:

The reference to Felix Frankfurter by Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch (*Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1989) in an article on affirmative action is gratuitous and irrelevant; in at least one major respect it is also profoundly false. Felix Frankfurter was not assimilated and surely was not an "assimilationist." He did not seek to hide his Jewishness and indeed insisted on it throughout his life—when, early in his career, he refused "wise" counsel from professional superiors that he change his name; when he played a leading role in the Zionist movement; when he publicly and proudly identified with the State of Israel; and, at the end, when he planned his own funeral and asked that the Kaddish be recited.

There is more yet to be learned and understood about Frankfurter, but not much of it is to be found in Hirsch's work, which Freeman and Mensch cite. I regret to see ignorance pooled and distortion compounded in your pages.

Louis Henkin
Columbia University
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I was disappointed that *Tikkun*'s chosen representatives did such a poor job of answering Michael Levin's argument about affirmative action. Henkin and Mensch and Freeman fail to acknowledge what is right about Levin's claims.

The fact of the matter is that every Jewish male who has entered the professional job market in the last twenty years has felt the discriminating effects of affirmative action. To these people, the academic refutations of Levin by *Tikkun*'s respondents are irrelevant. What do Henkin and Mensch and Freeman have to offer these people? Henkin calls them ungrateful, and Mensch and Freeman call them, by the latest fashion in Jewish sectarian smears, "assimilationist." Is it any wonder Jews feel more comfortable with the neoconservatives these days? Such name-calling is a helluva way to practice the politics of inclusion, not to mention the politics of compassion.

Affirmative action is a bad solution to a bad problem. A viable left solution would unite those constituencies that affirmative action sets against one another. It would look not at who gets into medical school, but at the role of doctors and the administration of health care; not at who gets into law school, but at the role of lawyers and access to the justice system. It would see these issues as inseparable from questions about how many professionals we need to do what, how they get educated, and how they get paid. But people on the left are timid about asking large questions and pessimistic about the possibility of creating mass movements to press the point, preferring opportunistic solutions like affirmative action.

Charles E. Berezin
Los Angeles, California

*Mensch and Freeman respond:*

Given Felix Frankfurter's role as guru to an entire generation of American legal scholars, knowledge of his cultural orientation may serve to

*(Continued on p. 84)*

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכָּתֵבוּ

May you be inscribed for a year of peace, joy, and fulfillment
—the *Tikkun* Staff

# Publisher's Page

*Nan Fink*

It is time now for me to talk straight with you about a very difficult subject: the finances of the magazine.

Most people hate talking about money, and I do too. This kind of discussion makes me feel vulnerable, because it means making private things public. I'd much rather keep on being protective of our internal financial arrangements.

Since the start of the magazine we—myself and Michael Lerner—have talked as little as possible publicly about our finances. Those people who know about the high cost of running a magazine have easily figured out that the magazine is not run on subscriptions alone and that there is a large yearly deficit. They often ask us how we pay for this deficit. We answer in a vague way that we use "personal money," and then we change the subject. Once in a while someone doesn't believe our answer. Don't we have a rich sponsor or sponsors? Who is *really* behind us? A few politically conservative people have insisted that Arabs must be supporting us, because of our stand about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The truth about the finances of the magazine is simple. From the beginning we ourselves have picked up the tab for the deficit. The tab is staggering: about $350,000 each year, plus the money used to start the venture. The total amount has been close to $1.5 million.

*Tikkun* has been an incredible labor of love, into which we have poured all our resources. It has taken our time, our energy, our creativity, our money. We had a dream, and we have used what was given to us to make that dream become a reality.

During these three-plus years we've had the pleasure of passing along to you, our readers, a wonderful gift. We are extremely grateful that we've been able to do this. Some of you probably have not known that the magazine in your hand comes partly from money out of our own pockets. We've kept quiet about that. It has always seemed that too much talk about what we were doing would make us self-conscious and somehow diminish the giving.

Our original plan in 1986 was to use our own money to establish the magazine rather than to look for outside funders. Realistically, it probably would have been just about impossible to find people willing to sink large amounts of money into our project, because it was only a dream in our heads. Also, we knew how we wanted the magazine to be, and we didn't want to compromise our ideas because of pressure from other funders.

We knew this venture would cost a great deal, even with careful fiscal management. We wanted the magazine to look high quality so that it would be taken seriously; that meant paying for decent paper and a full-color cover. Also, we knew that it needed strong promotion in order to be noticed. We were willing to absorb these costs.

I'm extremely pleased with how well *Tikkun* has done in becoming a central forum for the discussion of issues and a vehicle for creative expression. I'm also pleased with how it has become a strong alternative voice within the American Jewish world. The magazine has become very important to a large number of people. We hear about this daily.

I wish I could say that we can go on funding *Tikkun* as we have in the last several years. But we cannot. We have spent what we could, and now our money is running low.

This is happening according to schedule. We knew when we began the magazine that our limited funds would take us only through the third year of existence and that we would need to find other funding sources to help us out thereafter.

Every magazine has its life stages. We've gone through the birth/childhood stage, with us as the nurturing parents. Now we are entering the adulthood stage. The magazine is a fully developed and respected entity among national magazines. The time has come for it to get sustenance from additional people.

Here is our plan: First, we will continue to put our resources into the magazine, including our time and our smarts. Second, we will build up a cadre of *Tikkun* Associates, people who are committed to seeing the magazine continue. Our goal is to have one hundred Associates who contribute $1,000 per year, one hundred who contribute $500, and two thousand who contribute $100. Third, we will find people who are willing to contribute larger amounts of money.

As I have said, we are operating at a $350,000 yearly loss. We can cut a few expenses in the future if we must. For example, we can print on cheaper paper (which we would hate to do) and save about $10,000 a year. But almost all our expenses are fixed expenses and must be paid in order for the magazine to continue. Our staff is very small, and our production costs are as low as we can make them without compromising our standards.

To get an idea of the breakdown of our current

expenses and our current income, please look at these figures:

### Current Expenses

43% Production (Typeset, print, and mail magazine)
22% Labor (Office staff, authors)
19% Promotion (Advertising, direct mail, conferences)
9% Circulation (Subscription service)
7% Office (Equipment, supplies, mailings)

### Current Income:

51% Subscriptions
41% Our Personal Money
5% Newsstand/Bookstore Sales
2% Advertisements in Magazine
1% Donations from Subscribers

*Tikkun* will continue, but we need your help. If enough people take on the commitment to give a yearly donation to the magazine, it will survive.

I think that most of you understand the value and importance of *Tikkun*. You realize that there is no other voice that exists like it within the American Jewish world. You also realize the contribution the magazine makes to the crucial discussions about American politics and social issues. Also, you know that it provides one of the few places where a sense of community exists on the national level.

Healing and transforming the world is not something that just happens by itself. It takes all of us working together. Many of you see *Tikkun* as being instrumental in this process, a place where ideas are generated, articulated, and exchanged, a place where people can talk with each other.

The American right has been built up and sustained by people who are willing to put their money where their mouths are. The money doesn't come only from wealthy conservatives. It comes from ordinary, committed people.

Similarly, the conservative institutions in the American Jewish world are monied by people who realize that their institutions will collapse without their support. These people understand that they have a moral and political obligation to support the institutions in which they believe.

Many people in the liberal and progressive community don't take the step of contributing to institutions. Perhaps this is because they feel hopeless about significant change actually occurring. Or perhaps it is because they more easily take the role of critics, thinking no group is doing enough and therefore nothing is worthy of their support.

I am asking you now, and we will ask you in the future, to please support the magazine. Your help will insure that the work of *tikkun olam* being done by the magazine will continue.

You can help by becoming a *Tikkun* Associate for a minimum contribution of $100. In appreciation of your support we will give you a small gift in return.

We know that not everyone can make a gift of $100. We will be happy to accept whatever you can afford. Those of you who have fewer resources can also help by buying gift subscriptions for your friends and encouraging other people to become subscribers.

Please consider organizing a fundraising event in your community for the magazine. Perhaps you know people who would understand the valuable job *Tikkun* is doing and who would be willing to contribute money. It would help us a great deal if you contact these people for us, or let us know who they are.

As we make this shift from a personally-funded magazine to one that is more of a shared venture, we need your financial support. I hope that you can help us continue the good work that *Tikkun* is doing.

* * *

These early years of the magazine's life have been pleasurable in many ways. One of the greatest pleasures has been working with a wonderful staff.

I wish I could draw a circle around these people and not let any of them go, but that can't be done. Josh Henkin, who came for one year and blessed us with a two-year stay, will soon be leaving. His intelligence, his energy, and his leadership will be sorely missed. Also Andrea Siegel, who has been the most cheerful customer service manager any magazine could ever have, won't be at *Tikkun* much longer, and we will miss her. □

### In Memoriam

We mourn the loss of three close friends of *Tikkun*:

Michael Harrington
I. F. Stone
Trude Weiss-Rosmarin

All three were tireless crusaders for justice and peace. Harrington, a democratic socialist with deep Catholic roots, spoke at the *Tikkun* Conference to show his solidarity with the revival of the Jewish left. Stone was an enthusiastic member of the board of *Tikkun*'s CJSJ. Weiss-Rosmarin, a member of our editorial board, forged her magazine *The Jewish Spectator* into a beacon of hope and progressive politics. They will be deeply missed by all of us in the *Tikkun* community.

# Editorials

*Michael Lerner*

## *The Pro-flag and Anti-abortion Pathology*

In recent months, the right wing has managed to galvanize large numbers of people around pro-flag and anti-abortion campaigns. What accounts for the popular attraction of these causes? Israeli philosopher Yishayahu Leibowitz says that from the standpoint of Jewish law (halakha), a flag is simply a *shmate* (a rag) on a pole. So why all the passion? And why the seeming deeper commitment to the fate of the unborn than to the fate of the millions of children living in severe poverty and conditions of oppression?

Of course, some of the people involved in these movements are motivated by the surface arguments and have reasonable things to say. The abortion issue, for example, is complex, and many of those who have been most committed, as we are, to the pro-choice position, nevertheless insist that abortion is often troubling, and that it is reasonable to make complex moral judgments about when abortion is appropriate. Still, it appears to us that pro-choicers have a more consistent pro-life attitude than many of those in the anti-abortion movement, who care little about the fate of the fetus once it becomes a baby. While many individuals have legitimate moral concerns about abortion (and we all need to struggle with these concerns), the anti-abortion movement exhibits distinctly pathological features.

We also understand the legitimate desires of Americans to build cultural symbols of their shared values, but when they are whipped into such a frenzy that they would amend the Constitution to defend the flag from a mere handful of people who wish to burn that flag in order to signify their anger at various aspects of American society, we are dealing with a phenomenon that goes far beyond rational concerns.

To understand the pathology fully, we need to look at the pervasive pain and frustration, the feelings of worthlessness and lack of connection to others, and the alienation and desperate search for communities of meaning and purpose that underlie so much of contemporary American politics. In a society that offers people few opportunities to achieve the mutual recognition and affirmation that are fundamental human needs, the longing for connection with others is frequently coupled with a melancholy resignation that such longing is utopian and cannot be fulfilled in this world. Yet the desire for this connection—a desire normally denied by human beings so alienated by the dynamics of contemporary capitalist society that most people have given up all conscious hope for its realization—remains a driving force in the unconscious lives of most Americans.

Part of the energy of the anti-abortion movement comes from its ability to symbolically address this desire. The fetus is a symbol of an idealized, innocent being—actually the little child within us, who is not being adequately loved and accepted in our daily experience. The desire to be loved and accepted as human beings—a completely rational desire—is split off and projected onto the fetus. This object of fantasy is idealized and made pure—an innocent and perfect unborn creature (and because unborn, not yet sullied by the world).

But because this projection and process of idealization in fact involves an evasion and denial of actual pain, it is accompanied by another split-off part of their consciousness: the rage and hatred that people feel when they are not confirmed in their fundamental humanity. That anger is directed at a demonized "other" whose humanity is ignored or denied, transformed by imagination into the "murderers" killing little babies; the communists who are to be nuked out of existence; the criminals who must be executed; the drug addicts upon whom we must wage war; the Jews, Blacks, or Arabs who are routinely deemed responsible for the world's or a given society's problems. This is why it makes sense for so many supposed "pro-lifers" to fanatically oppose abortion and yet support the death penalty and American militarism. At the rational level, these views may seem inconsistent, but at the deeper psychological level they are expressive of the same distorted dynamic. Both the unborn fetus and the evil "other" are imaginary constructs that carry an unconscious meaning reflecting repression of people's most fundamental social need.

A similar loss of connectedness to others underlies the frantic attempts to amend the Constitution to "protect the flag." The commotion isn't really about a *shmate* on a pole, but rather is about the loss of the idealized community that the flag symbolizes. In the past, part of what gave coherence to individual and family life was its embeddedness in larger communities of meaning and shared purpose. Religious, ethnic, and political communities, even unions and social change organizations

such as the socialist and communist parties, provided a context within which people could feel connected to a larger purpose and historical meaning that transcended their individual lives.

With the erosion of genuine community within which people can feel recognized and confirmed for who they are, people in their isolation feel driven to seek out the imaginary communities provided them through an identification with "the nation." Yet the very lack of substance in these fantasies makes people's connection to these pseudo-communities feel unstable, and hence generates a frenzy and hysteria that is used to sustain a sense of a reality that might otherwise fade. In this context, the flag, the symbol of a perfect community that exists only in the imagination, becomes the vulnerable embodiment of all that people fear they are losing.

Ironically, though, there is one element in the fantasies people have about America that actually is real—and it is precisely that one real element that is threatened by the controversies over the flag and abortion. That element is the real way that America *has* preserved individual freedom. While preserving individual freedoms is not a sufficient basis for the creation of a community of meaning that can replace those that have eroded, the absence of this value is one reason why some of the previous communities lost their popular support. Individual freedom would certainly be a central value in any new community of meaning we would try to create.

From a tactical standpoint, civil libertarians might wish that the Supreme Court had not agreed to hear the case and involve itself in the flag issue at this historical moment. Yet it is precisely in the willingness to say that even the symbol of the society, the American flag, can be attacked, that the Supreme Court embodies what is very best in American society. We do not advocate that people burn the flag, but we applaud the Supreme Court for confirming that flag burning is constitutional. That the Supreme Court in effect allows us to look at America's most holy symbol as though it were a *shmate* on a pole gives us immense reason to be proud of the United States of America. It was this fierce commitment to individual liberties and to the right of people to make up their own minds about what to call holy that made it possible for our foremothers and forefathers to find haven on these shores. Shame on those pathetic political misleaders in the Congress, administration, and media who now seek a way to overturn that decision.

Ironically, the best way to defend these important freedoms of choice is *not* to insist on the sanctity of choice. Freedom of choice is just another candidate for what should be holy—and it has to contend on the same level as the various right-wing candidates for holiness. Rather, the task is to understand the unmet needs that lead people to an irrational and pathological politics. Then we must charge the liberal and progressive forces with finding more healthy and rational ways to address those needs by showing a better way for people to secure the recognition and connectedness they rightfully desire. Only then will we reconstitute communities of meaning that have been undermined by the individualist ethos.

If all this sounds a bit too psychological for you, just look at how unsuccessful the liberal and progressive forces have been in waging a defensive war against a right wing that is willing to talk about these issues. It's time to deepen the level of analysis and insist that political strategies address this fundamental dimension of human reality.

## *Editor's Notes*

During the month I spent in Israel this summer I made the painful discovery that few Israeli peace activists have concrete, strategic ideas about how they might change the Israeli political situation. Seeing themselves as powerless to change the minds of their fellow Israelis, many look to us in the U.S., hoping that the U.S. government eventually will pressure Israel to change its policies.

I'm worried that when the U.S. does change its policies, the pendulum may swing too far in an anti-Israel direction. Support for Israel is far softer than the conservatives in the Jewish world like to pretend. During the most recent hostage crisis precipitated by Israel's capture of Sheik Abdul Karim Obeid, the *Washington Post* ABC News Poll showed that support for Israel had fallen dramatically. Only 29 percent of Americans sampled in August said that Israel was a reliable ally of the United States, compared with 51 percent in a survey conducted four months earlier!

There is growing resentment against Israel's policies. Whether in Lebanon or on the West Bank, Israel seems to have no sense of limits. Every day the media tell the world about Israeli soldiers shooting and killing Palestinian civilians. When more than one-third of American Jews report that they are "morally outraged at some of Israel's actions," and almost half are "embarrassed by Israel's actions," something profound is happening.

Twenty months of the intifada have shaken many people's belief that Israel really does represent the commitment to democratic values and human rights that Americans found attractive about Israel in the first place.

That's part of the reason why we have urged Israel to change its policies quickly. No conceivable threat from a demilitarized Palestinian state of the sort *Tikkun* has championed could equal the very real military threat that would face Israel should its alliance with the U.S. dramatically weaken. Yet the occupation threatens

that alliance.

Even though I'm sure that American support for Israel will return to high levels once the hostage situation moves out of public consciousness, the variability in opinion shows what might happen one day when the underground resentment at Israel's insensitivity to Palestinians finds above-ground expression in the American political arena.

Those of us who love Israel must provide a way for the morally correct criticisms of the occupation to be expressed in a context that simultaneously validates both Israel and Zionism. If we don't, those who really hate Israel and those who have anti-Semitic subtexts to their criticism will appropriate the moral critiques and twist them dangerously. Many decent Americans, including some of our morally sensitive Jewish college students, feel absolutely sure that what Israel is doing is morally wrong. They are correct. But when they find that the only place where their insights get validated is amongst those who have an anti-Israel perspective, they get seduced into anti-Israel positions. It's in the interest of Israel to have its friends articulate the moral critique.

It's in this context that we have to think of the recent set of attacks directed at *Tikkun* by *Moment* magazine's editor Hershel Shanks, by American Jewish Committee consultant Stephen M. Cohen, and by other self-described "centrists." *Tikkun* has made these "centrists" uncomfortable by insisting that Israeli policy on the West Bank, including documented human rights abuses, is not only self-destructive but also immoral and a violation of what is best in the Jewish tradition. Our sin, according to these "centrists," is that we have articulated moralizing critiques of Israel rather than restricting ourselves to the "responsible" self-interest critiques that the "centrists" deem appropriate.

In fact, *Tikkun*-bashing has worked well for those who make their career as the "court critics" of the Jewish establishment: mix a critique of *Tikkun* with a few vague notions about the need to be both dovish and realistic, and you have an entrance ticket to see Jewish funders and establishment leaders. But the critique is misguided not only because we've always made the "self-interest" critique alongside the moral critique, but also because *making the moral critique is in the self-interest of Zionism and the Jewish people*—for reasons articulated above.

Many Israeli peace activists have made another point, as well: "The occupation has gradually eroded the moral sensitivities of many Israelis. The dynamics of the occupation lead toward an increasing brutalization of the Palestinian population. One thing that contributes to the current level of human rights abuses is the gradual decrease in our ability to recognize the humanity of Palestinians—precisely because we in Israel have created a discourse that legitimates only *Jewish self-interest* and has no other categories of concern. So, American Jews who insist on the primacy of moral considerations and remind Israelis of the long Jewish tradition of identifying with the oppressed and seeking peace and justice are doing us a real service and helping the Israeli peace movement." Or, as one activist put it: "Don't let the morally muddled moderates of the middle intimidate you folks who do insist on the primacy of values."

Some people told me we should be proud that we are getting so widely criticized by the Jewish establishment and their "court critics"—it proves that we are being taken seriously and having an effect. I could do with less of that kind of validation. But I was impressed by how seriously *Tikkun* is taken in Israel. Thousands of Israelis regularly read the magazine, and hundreds of thousands more read about *Tikkun*'s positions in Israeli newspapers and hear about them from the electronic media. Moreover, *Tikkun*'s positions are heard not only by those who agree with its perspective. Minutes after arriving at my hotel in Jerusalem, I received a phone call from the prime minister's office. Yitzhak Shamir's adviser on terrorism needed to see me; he wanted to argue with me about some of the details in the interview that I conducted with Nabil Shaath (*Tikkun,* May/June 1989). We met, but his arguments didn't convince me. I was convinced, however, that many people in the Israeli government read *Tikkun* and take its arguments very seriously.

Many doves see *Tikkun*'s role as pivotal. By making known to the American public the existence of many American Jews who are strong supporters of Israel and Zionism but who nevertheless deeply oppose the occupation, *Tikkun* is creating the political space in the U.S. that may allow the U.S. government to put moral pressure on Israel to move toward accommodation with the Palestinians without being labeled anti-Semitic or anti-Israel. Some of these doves told me that the small steps the U.S. has taken to pressure Israel into negotiations would have been politically more difficult without *Tikkun*'s presence on the scene.

Naturally, I was pleased with the enthusiasm about *Tikkun*. But I think it unrealistic for Israeli peace activists to wait around for the U.S. My reading of Bush and Baker is that they have no intention of risking any political capital by getting mired down in the details of Mideast negotiations. True, some State Department people think that, once negotiations start, everything will work out. But the basic approach at the highest level of the Baker State Department seems to be this: drag the issue out, keep it on a low burner, don't let it blow up in Bush's face, at least not before his possible reelection in 1992. Shamir's election proposal seems

*(Continued on p. 84)*

# Blue Skies: Reflections on Hollywood and the Holocaust

*Leslie Epstein*

I was born in 1938, in May, the same month Germans began sending Jews to Dachau. Germans? Jews? Dachau? I saw the light in Los Angeles, and for all I know the nurses in St. Vincent's wore the starched headgear of nuns. One of my earliest memories has to do with that sort of mix-up. I must have been four at the time, maybe five, and was sitting with my playmates around the edge of the Holmby Avenue pond, waiting for tadpoles to turn into frogs. The topic for the day seemed to be religion. At any rate, one of these contemporaries turned to me and said, "What are you?" Here was a stumper. All of the possible answers—a boy, a human, a first-grader—were common knowledge. While I stalled and stammered, one of the others took over:

"I know what I am! I'm a Catholic!"

That rang a bell. A historical tolling. Over a half century before, and close to a century ago now, my grandfather had stood in line at Ellis Island, wondering how he could translate the family name—Shabilian, one way, Chablian if you're in a fancy mood—into acceptable English. Just in front an immigrant was declaring, "Mine name, it is Epstein!" My grandfather, no dummy, piped up, "Epstein! That's my name, too!" Now, on the far side of the continent, his grandson provided the echo:

"Catholic! That's it! That's what I am!"

I must nonetheless have had my doubts, which I brought home that night. That's when I first heard the odd-sounding words, *Jewish, Jew.* "It's what you are," my mother informed me. "Tell your friends tomorrow."

The next afternoon, while the polliwogs battered their blunt heads against the stones of the pond, that is what I blithely proceeded to do. I do not think that, forty-five years later, I exaggerate the whirlwind of mockery and scorn that erupted about me. I can hear the laughter, see the pointing fingers, still. What horrified my companions, and thrilled them, too, was not so much the news that I was a Jew—surely they knew no more about the meaning of the word than I—as the fact that I had dared to switch sides at all. "Religion changer!" That was the cry. "He changed his religion!" *Vanderbilt*: what if the gentleman, the greenhorn, ahead of my grandfather had said that magic name? Or Astor? Or Belmont, even? What then?

From that day to this, the word "Jew," especially in the mouth of a gentile, has remained for me highly charged, with the ability to deliver something like an electric shock—rather the way the touch of a sacred totem might be dangerous to a Trobriand Islander, or the image of God is forbidden, awesome, to the devout of my own tribe. The irony is that I doubt whether, through the first decade of my life, I heard the word mentioned within my family at all. In this my parents, the son and daughter of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, were not atypical. The second generation, emancipated, educated, was as often as not hell-bent on sparing the third the kind of orthodox regime it had had to undergo itself. Still, I imagine that my brother's and my situation lay beyond the norm. For we were brought up less in the faith of our, than that of the founding, fathers: as Deists, children of the Enlightenment, worshipers before the idol of FDR.

This lukewarm belief sprang in part from the fact that our parents had settled in California while still in their twenties. Eastern shrubs in western climes. More decisive, I think, was the reason they'd made the move. Phil, my father, followed his identical twin brother Julie to Hollywood, where both began (and Julie continues) distinguished screenwriting careers. Now the figure of the Jew, on celluloid, had undergone any number of vicissitudes; but by the advent of the talkies, particularly with *The Jazz Singer* and *Abie's Irish Rose,* the puddle in the melting pot, the stuffing in the American dream, had pretty much taken on, at least insofar as the Jews were concerned, permanent shape. In the latter film, for instance, Abie Levy and Rosemary Murphy have to undergo three different marriage ceremonies—Episcopal, Jewish, and Catholic. As Patricia Erens points out in *The Jew in American Cinema* (1985), the title that introduces World War I reads like this:

> So in they went to that baptism of fire and thunder—Catholics, Hebrews, Protestants alike.... Newsboys and college boys—aristocrats and immigrants—all classes—all creeds—all American.

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Moreover, one can easily determine, by the treatment of the descending generations in this film—from the bearded, accented, and quite money-minded grandparents on—the ingredients for this Yankle stew: acculturation, assimilation, intermarriage; followed by blondness, blandness, and final effacement. These last three traits are meant always to apply to the third generation. Thus *Abie's Irish Rose* comes to a close with the birth of something like a genetic miracle—twins: Patrick, the lad; the girl, Rebecca. The movies rarely deviated from this recipe, which Erens calls "the tradition of casting Jewish actors as parents and Gentile-looking actors as their children." Make no mistake: my brother Ricky and I were firmly rooted in that tradition.

*The word "Jew" had been banished from American popular culture from the beginning to the end of World War II.*

Before continuing, I want to make it clear that my father and uncle were proud enough of their own Jewishness to follow both Hank Greenberg and Sid Luckman with special attentiveness. Indeed, Julie and Phil wrote the script not only for *Casablanca* (whose first word is "refugees"), but for what I believe is the *only* wartime film that dealt with domestic anti-Semitism. That, of course, is *Mr. Skeffington,* about which the Office of War Information complained, "The portrayal on the screen of prejudice against the representative of an American minority group is extremely ill-advised."

Still, is it surprising that the real-life children of the film community should suffer the same fate as the Rebeccas and Patricks their parents had created? That my brother and I should, in a sense, be acted by, or inhabited by, gentiles? Or that, since the word "Jew" had been banished from American popular culture from the beginning to the end of World War II ("If you bring out a Jew in film, you're in trouble": Louis B. Mayer), it might for the duration disappear from the households of those engaged on that particular front? Remember, the success of *The Jazz Singer,* whose theme was the repudiation of anything resembling ethnicity, turned Warner Brothers into a major studio: the Epstein twins had been writing for Jack ("See that you get a good clean-cut American type for Jacobs") Warner pretty much from the start of their careers. How could Julie and Phil, busily creating the American dream in a film like *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (don't look for their names in the credits; they gave the billing to a needy friend), not allow their own children to become part of that great national audience of upturned, white, anonymous faces? Would not we, no less than Paul Muni (né Weisenfreund) or Edward G. Robinson (Manny Goldenberg of yore) or John Garfield (another Julie—Garfinkle) become transformed? "People are gonna find out you're a Jew sooner or later," said Warner to Garfield, though it was meet that all who toiled in his domain heed the advice: "but better later."

Meanwhile, the lives of the Deists went on. The great ceremony of the year was Christmas. I never lit a Chanukah candle in my life until, mumbling the words of a phonetic prayer, I held the match for my own daughter, my own twin boys. The Chanukah miracle is pretty small potatoes compared to the star in the heavens, the wise men and their gifts, the stable filled with awestruck animals, and finally the birth of the little halo-headed fellow before whom all fall to their knees. Rest assured that when all this was acted out for me, year after year, by the students of the public schools of California (I may well have donned a beard myself and gripped what might have been a shepherd's crook or wise man's staff: either that, or I am once again adopting the guise—*that's what I am!*—of my friends), the J-word was never mentioned.

What most sticks in my mind, however, is the Christmas trees: giant firs, mighty spruces, whose stars—emblematic of the supernova over Bethlehem—grazed our eleven-foot ceilings. There were red balls, and silver cataracts of tinsel, and strings of winking lights—all strung by the Black maid and butler the previous night. Mary and Arthur were there the next morning, too: she to receive her woolen sweater, he his briar pipe. Of course my brother and I were frantic with greed, whipped up by weeks of unintelligible hymns ("myrrh," for instance, or "roundyon" from "Silent Night," or the Three Kings' "orientare"), by the mesmerizing lights and the smell of the tree itself, and by the sea of packages beneath it—and perhaps above all by the prospect of the rarest of all Epstein phenomena: the sight of our parents, in dressing gowns, with coffee cups, downstairs before the UCLA chimes struck noon.

Hold onto your hats: there was Easter, too. Not a celebration. No ham dinner. No parade. But there was no lack of symbols of rebirth and resurrection: the ones we dyed in pale pastels, the ones we hid under the cushions of the couch, and others, pure chocolate, that we gobbled down. The eggs I remember best were large enough to have been laid by dinosaurs, covered with frosted sugar, with a window at the smaller end. Through this pane we could see a sylvan scene: bunnies in the grass, squirrels in the trees, and birds suspended in a sky as perpetually blue as the one that arched over the city of the angels. Aside from Christmas and Easter, there were ordinary Sundays, when it was my habit to lie late in bed, listening to the radio. Twisting the dial

between a boy's piping voice, "I'm Buster Brown! I live in a shoe! [Arf! Arf!] That's my dog, Tyge; he lives in there, too!" and the genie's growl, "Hold on tight, little master!" I'd linger at a gospel station, at which point Mary would appear at my bedroom door. "That's right," she'd declare, with a broad smile. "You going to be blessed!" She was at least more subtle than the all-American rabbi in *Abie's Irish Rose,* whose words to a dying soldier the sharp-eyed Ms. Erens quotes as follows: "Have no fear, my son. We travel many roads, but we all come at last to the Father."

Make no mistake. Muni Weisenfreund's turning into Paul Muni is one thing. Saul of Tarsus's becoming St. Paul is quite another. Everyone knows what happened after the typical European priest gave his Easter sermon. Those were not chocolate eggs the peasants had been hunting for hundreds of years. The Jews who were rounded up the month I was born would have gone free (just as the millions who were soon to be gassed in ovens or shot at the edge of ditches would have been spared) if Constantine the Great—*religion-changer!*—had not seen a flaming cross in the sky: if Christianity had remained—as I dearly wish it had—a minor sect and not become a major heresy. Nonetheless, those performances at Brentwood and Canyon Elementary had done their work. How appealing to a child, those dumb donkeys! Those cows of papier-mâché! The mumbo jumbo of "inexcelsisdeo"! Few films have moved me as deeply as Pasolini's *Gospel According to St. Matthew,* which I sat through twice in a row, weeping at the figure of Jesus, the babe in the grade-school manger, broken now on the cross.

Inconceivable that the whole of the Second World War could go by without leaving a trace. Nor did it. But the truth is that for us, in California, in sunshine, the conflict was more a matter of the Japanese than of the Germans and Jews. I doubt very much whether I noticed when the Asians in nursery school and kindergarten disappeared. Almost certainly I paid no heed when the same fate befell the old gardener who smoothed our flower beds with his bamboo rake. Odds are I was too distracted by the exciting talk of submarines off the coast, or bombs falling by parachute over Seattle.

Thus there was never any question that the threat to us would come, as it already had at Pearl Harbor, from the Pacific. I can still remember the barrage balloons, like plump brown eggs, tied off the local beaches. My brother—aged what? three? four?—saw them from the end of Santa Monica Pier and began to whimper. A trick of perspective, the sharp sea air, the taut lines gathered on buoys or barges, made it seem that these fat blimps, a mile offshore, were street-corner balloons. "Want one! Want one!" Ricky cried, stamping his feet, throwing himself onto the planks of the dock.

Throughout the house on Holmby, half-smoked cigarettes, my mother's Chesterfields, bobbed in the waters of the toilet bowls. Sitting ducks, they were, for my stream of urine, which would sooner or later burst the zig-zagging hulls, sending thousands of tiny brown crewmen over the side, to drown next to their floundering transports. Even after the war, when we moved to a yet larger house on San Remo Drive, my fantasies remained fixed upon the Far East. And on nautical warfare. We'd purchased a surplus life raft, yellow rubber on the sides, blue on the bottom, which was initially, thrillingly, inflated by yanking a lever on a tube of gas. In this vessel, on the smooth waters of our swimming pool, I floated for hours. Through the windless afternoon. Under a pitiless sun. The downed airman. With a metal mirror, also surplus, I signaled every passing plane whose silhouette did not resemble that of a Zero.

Naturally my imaginative life was shaped by the movies. The jump from the cartoon festivals I attended each Saturday at the Bruin Theater to the war films showing everywhere else seemed a normal progression, just as the cartoons themselves were an innate part of the animism of a child's world. If a discarded pair of pants could become, in the dim light of one's bedroom, a slumbering crocodile, or a breeze in the curtain a masked intruder, then there was little to wonder at when barnyard animals, creatures of instinct much like ourselves, began to dress up, sing like Jiminy Cricket, or scheme for a piece of cheese. Also: murder each other, poleax their enemies, chop them to smithereens, or flatten them under the wheel of a steamroller, as thin as a dime. All victims, it seemed, had nine lives. No death was unresurrected. It was this, I suppose, along with the white-hat, black-hat morality of the westerns, with their thousands of expendable Indians, that eased the transition to *Winged Victory* and *Pride of the Marines.* Now the enemies were mowed down like ducks, or blown, as Tom was by Jerry and Jerry by Tom, sky-high. *Yankee Doodle Mouse.* 1943.

This early immersion in cartoons may help explain why, since I probably saw as many movies about the war in Europe as I did about the fighting in Asia, my attention remained firmly fixed upon the Pacific Theater. The Germans in movies were simply too adult, real smoothies like Conrad Veidt—witty, cunning, prone to understatement and reserve. Even the Prussian stereotypes, the smoothly shaved head, curled lip, and glinting monocle of a Preminger or Von Stroheim, possessed a kind of refined sadism worlds removed from the clear-cut cruelty of a mouse handing a cat a sizzling bomb.

There was no problem of reticence in the movies that dealt with the war in the Pacific. Here the violence was full-bore. More crucial, the enemy, like the Indians, was of a different race—no, almost a different species,

like the talking animals we already knew. Indeed, when these short, comical characters—yellow-skinned, buck-toothed, bespectacled—did speak, they had something of Porky's stammer, or Woody's cackle, or the juicy lisp of Daffy Duck. Thus the most forceful images of war remained, for me, those of death marches, jungle patrols, palm trees bent under withering fire, and kamikaze pilots with blank faces and free-flowing scarves.

These images were pleasurable only because I, a Hollywood child, came to know that nothing I saw was real. Towering over the lot at Twentieth-Century-Fox was a huge outdoor sky, painted so much like the real one, white clouds against a background of startling blue, that whenever we drove by I had to look twice to see which was which. The decisive moment came when I visited a sound lot, probably at Warners, where a pilot, one of our boys, was trapped inside his burning plane. A cross section of the fuselage rested on sawhorses; the actor's legs protruded beneath it, standing firm on the floor. Also on the floor, flat on their backs, were two civilians, one with a flame-throwing torch, the other with a plain wooden stick. "Action!" shouted the director. At once the pilot began to beat on the inside of his cockpit. The torch shot gobs of fire in front of the white linen background. The fellow with the stick banged at the fuselage, so that, bucking, shaking, it seemed about to break apart. Finally the pilot managed to pry off his canopy and thrust his head into the wind machine's gale. "Cut!"

The ambiguity of both that Magritte sky and desperate scene, indeed the tranquil unreality of the war itself—all that concluded one afternoon at Holmby Park. What I remember is my father running pell-mell down the avenue, snatching me off the playground swing, and then dashing back up the hill toward our house. "The war is over!" he shouted. Either that or "The president is dead!" I have a scar, hardly visible now, under my lip, from the time I fell off that very swing. Possibly it's that catastrophe I recall—the same sense of urgency, the same excitement, the elation at flying along in my father's arms—and not Roosevelt's death, or the bomb burst that brought the war to an end.

Not long afterward we moved to the house with the swimming pool. Already my missing schoolmates were starting to return. So did our gardener, or one like him, arriving like a comical fireman in an old truck covered with hoses and ladders and tools. He tended lawns set with fig and cork trees and eucalyptus. The property was surrounded by lemon groves, which perfumed the air and filled it, two or three times a year, with canary-colored light. We weren't the first movie people in the neighborhood: Joseph Cotten's place was catercorner, on Montana; and a block or two over, toward Amalfi, were Linda Darnell, Lou Costello, and Virginia Bruce. Down the hill our school bus made a loop into Mandeville Canyon to drop off the son of Robert Mitchum. Not the first film folk, then; but among the first Jews. For when the former owner of our house, Mary Astor, changed her name, it wasn't from Manny or Muni but from the proper Lucille. The gentile who disguised himself as Phil Green in *Gentleman's Agreement* was none other than our neighbor, Gregory Peck. The closest we came to a refugee was the sight of Thomas Mann, walking his dog along San Remo Drive. The Epsteins were the pioneers.

That meant my friends had such names as Warren and Sandy and Tim and John. We used to build forts together, ride our bikes through the polo fields, and use our Whammos to shoot blue jays and pepper the cars on Sunset Boulevard with the hard round pellets that grew on the stands of cypress above. We also camped out on each other's lawns. The smear of stars in the Milky Way is the prime text for Deists. All is order, beauty, design. The ticking of the master clock. Yet our gaze, once we closed the flap of our pup tents, was lower. In the new sport of masturbation one kept score by palpable results. A drop. A dollop. At one such tourney, the champion posed in our flashlight beams, his member bent at the angle of a fly rod fighting a trout. At precisely the midway point in twentieth-century America, the rest of us, the slowpokes, saw that something was amiss. Uncircumcised. Here was a rip, a rent, in the universal design. From this common sight I drew a skewed lesson. I may have been in the immediate majority, hygienic as any in the crowd. Yet I knew as gospel that the one who had been torn from the true course of nature was not he, the victor, our pubescent pal, but I.

Which is to say that, over time, we discovered differences. This was palmy Pacific Palisades: no crosses were burned on lawns, no swastikas scratched on lamp-posts. In our half-wilderness—polo ponies in the fields below, and, above, hills covered with yucca, prowled by bobcats—there were not even lamps. But one morning I arrived at the vacant lot where the bus was to take me to Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior High, only to find that the usual allegiances had shifted. My friends greeted me by throwing clods of dirt, sending me back to the wrong side of the boulevard. Their cry was "Kike! Go Home! Kike! Kike!"

Now this was not, in the words of the old transcendentalist, the shot heard 'round the world. Certainly the incident was a far cry from the kind of warfare the Epstein boys had engaged in, circa 1921, on the Lower East Side. There, you had to battle your way against the Irish, against the Italians, just to get to the end of the

*(Continued on p. 84)*

# To Blacks and Jews: Hab Rachmones

*James A. McPherson*

About 1971, Bernard Malamud sent me a manuscript of a novel called *The Tenants*. Malamud had some reservations about the book. Specifically, he was anxious over how the antagonism between Harry Lesser, a Jewish writer, and Willie Spear, a Black writer, would be read. We communicated about the issue. On the surface, Malamud was worried over whether he had done justice to Willie Spear's Black idiom; but beneath the surface, during our exchange of letters, he was deeply concerned about the tensions that were then developing between Black intellectuals and Jewish intellectuals. I was living in Berkeley at the time, three thousand miles away from the fragmentation of the old civil rights coalition, the mounting battle over affirmative action, and most of the other incidents that would contribute to the present division between the Jewish and Black communities.

I was trying very hard to become a writer. As a favor to Malamud, I rewrote certain sections of the novel, distinguished Willie Spear's idiom from Harry Lesser's, and suggested several new scenes. I believed then that the individual human heart was of paramount importance, and I could not understand why Malamud had chosen to end his novel with Levenspiel, the Jewish slumlord who owned the condemned building in which the two antagonists lived, pleading with them "*Hab rachmones*" ("Have mercy"). Or why Levenspiel begs for mercy 115 times. Like Isaac Babel, I felt that a well-placed period was much more effective than an extravagance of emotion. Malamud sent me an autographed copy of the book as soon as it was printed. Rereading the book eighteen years later, I now see that, even after the 115th plea for mercy by Levenspiel, there is no period and there is no peace.

Well-publicized events over the past two decades have made it obvious that Blacks and Jews have never been the fast friends we were alleged to be. The best that can be said is that, at least since the earliest decades of this century, certain spiritual elites in the Jewish community and certain spiritual elites in the Black community have found it mutually advantageous to join forces to fight specific obstacles that block the advancement of both groups: lynchings, restrictive housing covenants, segregation in schools, and corporate expressions of European racism that target both groups. During the best of times, the masses of each group were influenced by the moral leadership of the elites. From my reading of the writers of the extreme right wing, in whose works one can always find the truest possible expression of white racist sentiment, I know that the Black and Jewish peoples have historically been treated as "special cases." The most sophisticated of these writers tend to examine the two groups as "problems" in Western culture. Both share incomplete status. Both are legally included in Western society, but for two quite different reasons each has not been fused into the "race."

Until fairly recently, Jews were considered a "sect-nation," a group of people living within Western territorial states and committed to a specific religious identity. This extraterritorial status allowed Jews to convert and become members of a confessional community, as was often the case in Europe, or to drop any specific religious identification and become "white," as has often been the case in the United States.

This second Jewish option is related, in very complex ways, to the special status of Black Americans and thus to the core of the present Black-Jewish problem. The romantic illusions of Black Nationalism aside, Black Americans have not been Africans since the eighteenth century. Systematic efforts were made to strip Black slaves of all vestiges of the African cultures from which they came. The incorporation of European bloodlines, from the first generations onward, gave the slaves immunities to the same diseases, brought by Europeans to the Americas, that nearly decimated America's indigenous peoples. The slave ancestors of today's thirty or so million Black Americans took their ideals from the sacred documents of American life, their secular values from whatever was current, and their deepest mythologies from the Jews of the Old Testament. They were a self-created people, having very little to look back on. The one thing they could not acquire was the institutional protection, or status, that comes in this country from being classified as "white." And since from its very foundation the United States has employed color as a negative factor in matters of social mobility, we Black

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Americans have always experienced tremendous difficulties in our attempts to achieve the full rewards of American life. The structure of white supremacy is very subtle and complex, but the most obvious thing that can be said about it is that it "enlists" psychologically those whites who view their status as dependent on it. It has the effect of encouraging otherwise decent people to adopt the psychological habits of policemen or prison guards.

Given this complex historical and cultural reality, most Black Americans, no matter how wealthy, refined, or "integrated," have never been able to achieve the mobility and security available to whites. Jewish Americans, by contrast, have this option, whether or not they choose to exercise it. Blacks recognize this fact, and this recognition is the basis of some of the extreme tension that now exists between the two groups. While Jews insist that they be addressed and treated as part of a religious community, most Black Americans tend to view them as white. When Jews insist that Jewish sensitivities and concerns be recognized, Black Americans have great difficulty separating these concerns from the concerns of the corporate white community.

And yet, despite the radically different positions of the two groups, there has been a history of alliances. Perhaps it is best to say that mutual self-interest has defined the interaction between Blacks and Jews for most of this century. In her little-known study, *In the Almost Promised Land,* Hasia R. Diner has traced the meeting and mutual assessment of the two peoples as presented in the Yiddish press to the two million Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia who came to the United States during the first four decades of this century. Community papers like the *Tageblatt* and the *Forward* forged a socialistic language that brought together Jewish immigrants from different backgrounds, that helped them acculturate, and that advised them about the obstacles and opportunities they would find in America. These papers gave more attention to Black American life than to any other non-Jewish concern. They focused on Black marriage and family, on Black crime, on Black "trickery and deception," and on Black education, entertainment, and achievement. They linked Black suffering to Jewish suffering. Diner writes:

> The Yiddish papers sensed that a special relationship existed between blacks and Jews and because of this the press believed that the two groups were captivated by each other.... Jews believed that a history of suffering had predisposed Jews toward understanding the problems of blacks. ("Because we have suffered we treat kindly and sympathetically and humanly all the oppressed of every nation.")

The central theme was that Black people were America's Jews. Historical parallels were emphasized: the Black Exodus from the South was compared to the Jewish Exodus from Egypt and to the Jewish migration from Russia and Germany.

But there were much more practical reasons why the two groups—one called "white," the other defined by caste; one geared to scholarship and study, the other barely literate; one upwardly mobile, the other in constant struggle merely to survive—managed to find common ground during the first four decades of this century. There was the desperate Black need for financial, legal, and moral support in the fight against racism, lynchings, and exclusion from the institutions of American life. There was the Jewish perception that many of the problems of exclusion faced by Black people were also faced by Jews. Diner writes:

> Black Americans needed champions in a hostile society. Jewish Americans, on the other hand, wanted a meaningful role so as to prove themselves to an inhospitable [society].... Thus, American Jewish leaders involved in a quest for a meaningful identity and comfortable role in American society found that one way to fulfill that search was to serve as the intermediaries between blacks and whites. The Jewish magazines defined a mission for Jews to interpret the black world to white Americans and to speak for blacks and champion their cause.

Diner is describing the "interstitial" role, traditionally assumed by Jewish shopkeepers and landlords in Black communities, being extended into the moral sphere. Given the radical imbalance of potential power that existed between the two groups, however, such a coalition was fated to fail once American Jews had achieved their own goals.

For mutually self-interested reasons, I believe, the two groups began a parting of the ways just after the Six Day War of 1967. The rush of rationalizations on both sides—Jewish accusations of Black anti-Semitism, Black Nationalist accusations of Jewish paternalism and subversion of Black American goals—helped to obscure very painful realities that had much more to do with the broader political concerns of both groups, as they were beginning to be dramatized in the international arena, than with the domestic issues so widely publicized. Within the Black American community, even before the killing of Martin King, there arose a nationalistic identification with the emerging societies of newly liberated Africa. In the rush to identify with small pieces of evidence of Black freedom *anywhere* in the world, many Black Americans began to embrace ideologies and traditions that were alien to the traditions that had been developed, through painful struggle, by their earliest ancestors on American soil.

A large part of this romantic identification with Africa resulted from simple frustration: the realization that the moral appeal advocated by Martin King had authority only within those Southern white communities where the remnants of Christian tradition were still respected. The limitations of the old civil rights appeal became apparent when King was stoned while attempting to march in Cicero, Illinois, in 1966. We Black Americans discovered that many ethnic Americans, not just Southern whites, did not care for us. The retrenchment that resulted, promoted by the media as Black Nationalism, provided convenient excuses for many groups to begin severing ties with Black Americans. Expressions of nationalism not only alienated many well-meaning whites; they had the effect of discounting the Black American tradition of principled struggle that had produced the great leaders in the Black American community. To any perceptive listener, most of the nationalistic rhetoric had the shrillness of despair.

*My deepest fear is that the dynamics of American racism will force Black Americans into a deeper identification with the Palestinians.*

For the Jewish community, victory in the Six Day War of 1967 caused the beginning of a much more complex reassessment of the Jewish situation, one based on some of the same spiritual motivations as were the defeats suffered by Black Americans toward the end of the 1960s. The Israeli victory in 1967 was a *reassertion* of the nationhood of the Jewish people. But, like the founding of Israel in 1948, this reassertion raised unresolved contradictions. My reading teaches me that, until the twentieth century, Zion to most Jews was not a tangible, earthly hope, but a mystical symbol of the divine deliverance of the Jewish nation. Zion was a heavenly city that did not yet exist. It was to be planted on earth by the Messiah on the Day of Judgment, when historical time would come to an end. But the Jewish experience in Europe seems to have transformed the dream of a heavenly city into an institution in the practical world. This tension has turned the idea of the Jews as a nation existing as the community of the faithful into the idea of Israel as a Western territorial sovereign. Concerned for its survival, Israel has turned expansionist; but the price it has paid has been the erosion of its ethical identity. It is said that the world expects more from the Jews than from any other people. This deeply frustrating misconception, I believe, results from the dual premise (religious and political) of the State of Israel. I also believe that American Jews are extraordinarily frustrated when they are unable to make non-Jews understand how sensitive Jews are to uninformed criticism after six thousand years of relentless persecution.

The majority of Black Americans are unaware of the complexity of the meaning of Israel to American Jews. But, ironically, Afro-Zionists have as intense an emotional identification with Africa and with the Third World as American Jews have with Israel. Doubly ironic, this same intensity of identification with a "Motherland" seems rooted in the mythologies common to both groups. In this special sense—in the spiritual sense implied by "Zion" and "Diaspora" and "Promised Land"—Black Americans *are* America's Jews. But given the isolation of Black Americans from any meaningful association with Africa, extensions of the mythology would be futile. We have no distant homeland preparing an ingathering. For better or worse, Black Americans are *Americans*. Our special problems must be confronted and solved here, where they began. They cannot be solved in the international arena, in competition with Jews.

Related to the problem of competing mythologies is a recent international trend that, if not understood in terms of its domestic implications, will deepen the already complex crisis between Blacks and Jews. The period of European hegemony, mounted in the fifteenth century and consolidated in the nineteenth, imposed on millions of non-European people values and institutions not indigenous to their cultural traditions. One of these institutions was the nation-state. Since the end of World War II, the various wars of independence in India, Asia, Africa, and elsewhere have exposed the fact that a European invention does not always meet the mythological, linguistic, and cultural needs of different ethnic groups competing within artificial "territorial states." We sometimes forget that it took many centuries for Europeans to evolve political forms suited to their own habits. Since the 1950s, colonized people have begun to assert their own cultural needs. The new word coined to define this process is "devolutionism." While devolutionism is currently a Third World phenomenon, two of the most prominent groups within the territorial United States, because of their unique origins, can be easily drawn into this struggle: Black Americans, because of our African origins and our sympathy for the liberation struggle currently taking place in South Africa; and Jews, because of their intense identification with Israel. Given the extent of Israeli involvement in South Africa, and given the sympathy many Black Americans feel for Black South Africans and Palestinians, it is only predictable that some Black Americans would link the two struggles. My deepest fear is that the dynamics of American racism will

force Black Americans into a deeper identification with the Palestinians, thus incorporating into an already tense domestic situation an additional international dimension we just do not need. The resulting polarization may well cause chaos for a great many people, Blacks and Jews included.

I have no solutions to offer beyond my feeling that we should begin talking with each other again.

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*"Anti-Semitism is the way Blacks join the majority. Racism is the way Jews join the majority."*

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I remember walking the streets of Chicago back in 1972 and 1973, gathering information for an article on Jewish slumlords who had "turned" white neighborhoods and then sold these homes at inflated prices to poor Black people, recent migrants from the South, on installment purchase contracts. I remember talking with Rabbi Robert Marx, who sided with the buyers against the Jewish sellers; with Gordon Sherman, a businessman who was deeply disturbed by the problem; with Marshall Patner, a lawyer in Hyde Park; and with other Jewish lawyers who had volunteered to work with the buyers in an attempt to correct the injustice. I spent most of a Guggenheim Fellowship financing my trips to Chicago. I gave the money I earned from the article to the organization created by the buyers. And although the legal case that was brought against the sellers was eventually lost in Federal District Court, I think that all the people involved in the effort to achieve some kind of justice found the experience very rewarding. I remember interviewing poor Black people, the victims, who did not see the sellers as Jews but as whites. I remember interviewing Mrs. Lucille Johnson, an elderly Black woman who seemed to be the spiritual center of the entire effort. Her influence could get smart Jewish and Irish lawyers to do the right thing as opposed to the legal thing. I asked her about the source of her strength. I still remember her reply:

> [T]he bad part of the thing is that we just don't have what we need in our lives to go out and do something, white or black. We just don't have *love*. . . . But this ain't no situation to get hung up on color; getting hung up on some of God's love will bail us out. I think of "Love one another" and the Commandments. If we love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds, and love our neighbors as ourselves, we done covered them Commandments. And "Let not your heart be troubled; he that believes in God believes also in me. . . ."

I think there was, a generation or two ago, a group of stronger and wiser Black and Jewish people. I think they were more firmly grounded in the lived mythology of the Hebrew Bible. I think that, because of this grounding, they were, in certain spiritual dimensions, almost one people. They were spiritual elites. Later generations have opted for more mundane values and the rewards these values offer. Arthur Hertzberg told me, "Anti-Semitism is the way Blacks join the majority. Racism is the way Jews join the majority. Individuals in both groups have the capacity to package themselves in order to make it in terms the white majority can understand."

Certain consequences of the Black–Jewish alliance cannot be overlooked. The spiritual elites within both groups recognized, out of common memories of oppression and suffering, that the only true refuge a person in pain has is within another person's heart. These spiritual elites had the moral courage to allow their hearts to become swinging doors. For at least six decades these elites contributed to the soul of American democracy. Their influence animated the country, gave it a sense of moral purpose it had not known since the Civil War. The coalition they called into being helped to redefine the direction of the American experience and kept it moving toward transcendent goals. With the fragmentation of that coalition, and with the current divisions among its principles, we have fallen into stasis, if not into decadence. Bernard Malamud's Levenspiel the landlord would like to be rid of his two troublesome tenants. I have no solutions to offer. But, eighteen years later, I want to say with Malamud: Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy

I want to keep saying it to all my friends, and to all my students, until we are strong enough to put a period to this thing. □

# Mornings and Mourning: A Kaddish Journal

*E. M. Broner*

I am amputated, inconsolable. My Dad has died.

Eighty-five is more than the proverbial three score and ten, but if it is the life of one's father, one's history, then how can it be concluded? He has stories still untold, and there are stories I can never tell him. There is the support I will not receive; there is his wife left to grieve.

"Our life was like a Great Books Club," said my mother. "We read, we discussed." Now she will turn the pages silently.

I will have to make up my Dad, fictionalize, mythologize him. Most of all, I will have to find a way to mourn him.

I consult friends. "Whatever you do, it won't be enough," one warns me. I decide to do enough. I will mourn rigorously, vigorously. I decide to attend daily services at an Orthodox synagogue. I have read Chaim Potok. I have seen the Orthodox on the Upper West Side, joyously preparing for holidays. I innocently think my coreligionists will be delighted to have me in their midst.

## January 16, 1987

I appear at my neighborhood synagogue at 7:45 A.M., the work force of the city already pouring out of PATH trains from New Jersey, out of the Lexington and Seventh Avenue lines. The shopkeepers have swept or hosed down their walks. The news vendors have spread out their wares at dawn. So it is no surprise that the doors of the synagogue are unlocked.

I enter to find a small *davening* (praying) room on the street level. Only one person is sitting there, a gaunt, gray-haired woman. She sits behind a clothes rack on wheels with a curtain stretched across it. The curtain serves as a *mekhitza* (partition). I smile uncertainly and sit across the aisle.

"Here, here!" Doris points to her bench. "They make us sit here, behind the *shmate* (rag). That shit Schlomo said it was too see-through and put a *tallis* (prayer shawl) over the rack. I don't know whether the men on the other side are standing up or sitting down. I don't know whether the ark is opened or closed. I don't know if it's summer or winter.

"Damn 'em to hell," she continues, "especially Schlomo and that miserable Ornstein and that freak Joshua."

She's giving me the characters, but what's the plot?

"I rush in only at *kaddish* time to pray for my sister and rush back out again. I wait in the corridor. I won't sit behind the *shmate*. Let 'em all burn in hell."

I see Doris only once more at morning *davening* because she is finishing her *kaddish* time. I don't know that soon I'll be talking just like her.

## January 28

They are all ancient. The *shamash* (sexton), addressed by his occupation, is ninety-five—and not the oldest. He has a competitor in Rodney, ninety-seven. Although the *shamash* dresses for the job, Rodney takes out his uncomfortable teeth, shuffles in slippers, eases open the buttons of his shirt so he can flap in the room.

The *shamash* counts the crowd. He doesn't have the required ten Jewish men, a minyan, to read the *kaddish, barakhu*, and *keddusha*. So he goes out on the street to hunt for more. No matter how hard-pressed these men are to get the required ten, I am never counted in the crowd.

"Here comes half a man," the *shamash* chuckles as he greets me each morning. "Too bad; I need a whole."

On my second morning, the *shamash* goes out the door of the shul and returns with his find—a whole man, though a street cuckoo. This bird hoots and crows throughout the prayers.

One bulky congregant with a short white beard confronts me aggressively. He must be the accursed Schlomo.

"Stay behind the curtain, lovely lady," he says. "We can't look at you during prayers."

Doris must have been a "lovely lady" also. The lace curtain is the kind one would have seen in a 1930s living room or parlor. Schlomo pulls the clothes rack across my instep saying, "You dazzle us."

The elderly *shamash* says, "Don't bother her. She's not bothering you."

He will prove to be my ally in the months of daily services, a cranky, bawling-out ally.

Fred, a widower and a joker, tells a joke a day. His jokes are often God jokes or Miami Beach jokes. Sometimes God appears at Miami Beach. This is a God joke:

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*The first chapter from E. M. Broner's novel-in-progress,* The Repair Shop, *was published in* Tikkun *(April/May 1987). The piece presented here is excerpted from a full-length manuscript.*

There is a religious old coot who places all power in the hands of the Lord. A great flood comes to his town and a car comes by. The water is up to his doorstep, but the old man shakes his head. "God will provide," he says. The water rises to the second story of his house. He's hanging out of the window. A rowboat floats up to the window. "No," refuses the religious man. "God will provide." The water rises in town and valley. The old man is on the roof of his house, clinging to the chimney. A helicopter flies overhead and lets down a ladder. "No," says the old man. "God will provide." The old man dies and goes to heaven. He meets the Lord. "How could you let me die when I believed in you?" cries the man. "Schmuck," says the Lord. "Who do you think sent the car, the boat, the plane?"

## January 29

I won't hide out in the corridor as Doris did. I stand next to the curtain, not behind it.

"Cover the young woman," says an elder.

They always refer to me as "young," though I'm in my middle years. They think of it as gallantry, I as dismissive.

The *shamash* ignores the complainer. He has business on his mind, bawling-out business. "If you neglect reading one word of this prayer," he says, tapping the page, "then your father won't get up there. He'll lie here flat like a matzo."

My father clearly needs leavening.

"Hurry," says the *shamash*. "We can't wait all day. We have to get to work."

Not so. Most of the men have a long day stretching out before them: coffee at the counter of a luncheonette, a visit to the local library, a bet on the Belmont races, a meeting, they hope, with someone on the bench near their building or while standing in the supermarket check-out line.

After *davening,* the men invite me for *kiddush,* the after-service munchies.

"Give yourself a lift," says Fred. "Give the day a push-up."

The *shamash* shuffles quickly to the *kiddush* room, turning to tell me, "There are three things old men love: *davening,* herring, and schnapps." He pauses. "Maybe four," he says. "Sex."

"Sex?" I ask.

"Sure, lady," he says. "Stick around!" He swings his cane jauntily.

My Dad would have shaken his head in amusement at this whole scene. He would have rubbed his hands to warm them from the stiffening arthritis, and chuckled, "Don't let that material go to waste, Esther. Use it."

## January 30

I find myself challenged each morning by the others. Will I move just a bit behind the curtain?

"Never," I say, attaching myself firmly to the bench, rolling the curtain on its wheels away from me.

Would I mind not getting my own prayer book, just waiting for it to be set on my bench?

"Never," I say, going to the cabinet.

Would I dress in a seemly fashion, cease from wearing slacks this winter?

"Never," I say and go down to the Emotional Outlet, which is having its winter sale on lined pants.

## February 12

I have disturbed some of the regulars, especially those cursed by Doris: Schlomo, the new-coined Jew; Ornstein, a rabbi without a congregation; Joshua, Black, Orthodox, and gay. Schlomo and Joshua are followers of the strict Orthodoxy of Rabbi Ornstein. There are others, not necessarily part of this cabal, who also look upon me with disfavor—like the professor, a stern martinet who covers his face with his long, fringed *tallis* and turns his back upon me when he prays. If he pokes his head out of the *tallis,* if he happens to catch my eye, he flicks his *tallis* at me. I feel as if I am being shooed away like some farm animal.

Rabbi Ornstein approaches me and says, "You are misbehaving in my house. We are Orthodox here and do not allow women to show their faces."

I look unblinkingly at him. He pulls the clothes rack in front of me. I push it back.

"Listen, lady," he says. "You have no business here."

"I have as much business as you," I say. "And this is not your house."

He is enraged. "Lady, there's no place for you here."

"You have nothing to say about it," I say, and try to open the prayer book, but he pulls loose the curtain from the rack, throws it over my head, and seems to attempt to strangle me! It's so startling, this little *shteeble,* this small room, the scene of such melodrama.

"Get out, lady!" he yells.

I give him the knee and pull loose.

"Don't call me 'lady,'" I yell back, as nuts as he is. "Call me doctor."

"I know what I'll call you—*zona,* whore," he says.

The men in the room are startled. That is not a word thrown around lightly. Fred, the jokester, looks unusually serious, even hangs his head. Larry, a retiree, the former button man, nods at me to have courage when, flushed, I try to continue with the service. The professor shakes his head at both of us. "Two wrongs do not make a right," he says, turning his back on both houses.

## February 14

A cabal forms that lasts the whole eleven months of my saying *kaddish*. The nice rabbi of the synagogue is concerned. More than anything he wants *shalom bayit* (peace in the house). But, without his regulars, how will he ever get up a minyan? Ornstein, Joshua, Schlomo, and their constituents have started an earlier minyan which meets at 6:45 A.M. They only occasionally peek into ours. The rabbi phones the grocer or the hotel manager; or he stands by the front door, leaving it slightly ajar, and tries to hook a fish. The life of this sweet man is not easy.

The professor often joins the earlier minyan, or, if prevailed upon by the rabbi to be the tenth man, he *davens* in the corridor, pacing back and forth like some disturbed ghost under his great prayer shawl. One or another of the group peers into the *davening* room and, upon catching a glimpse of me, refuses to enter.

One morning Joshua enters the prayer room for our minyan. He leans toward me across the separation and asks, "Don't you know the difference between men and women? You're an educated woman. I shouldn't have to explain to you that this is the way it is, this is the law of separation. You've got to obey the law."

I whisper back, "Don't *you* send me to the back of the bus!"

I begin to feel my skin prickle. I am the only minority in the group. In these quarters any man is acceptable, superior to me.

Does my Black coreligionist, who rejects my presence here, elsewhere feel his own skin like an ill-fitting coat, like a wrinkled rhinoceros hide? Does he hear whispers and does he try to sit more and more compactly, as has become my wont?

## February 16

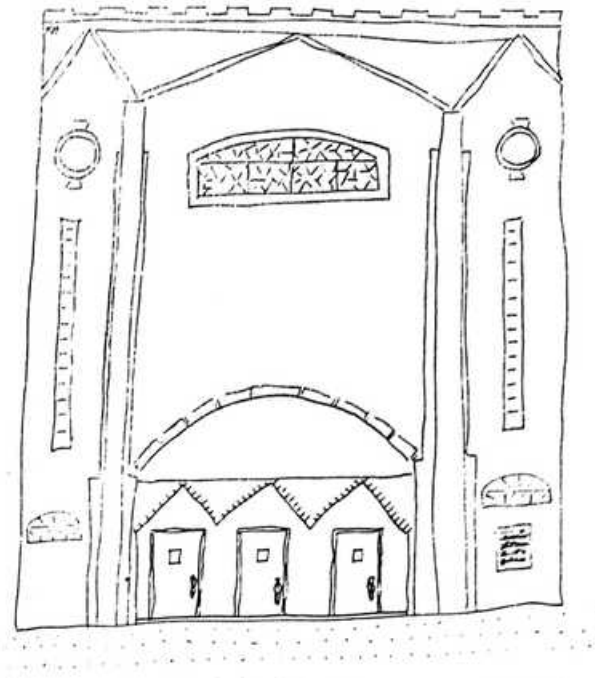
A new curtain is in place. The rabbi cracked his ankle on the old clothes rack.

"A person could break something in this place," he said.

"Only the heart," I said.

For safety's sake, and in order not to be sued, the clothes rack is replaced with a most peculiar *mekhitza*: shower curtains hung from hooks. It is opaque. It will please everyone, the rabbi says. When I enter, the room becomes quiet. The men await my reaction. It is mid-week, and I am not teaching. Instead, I am going to the "Y," carrying my string bag. I open the bag and reach between the towel and shampoo for the bathing cap. I tuck my hair into the white cap, open the shower curtains, and *daven*.

I take to carrying sharp little scissors to poke holes in the plastic curtains. Within a few days the curtains are replaced with the third *mekhitza*.



During my tenure behind the shower curtain I change my style of dress. I go midtown to Macy's and come back with outerwear that Schlomo could truly call "dazzling." I wear jackets and a raincoat in Day-Glo colors. One of the jackets is a phosphorescent purple; another, jade green leather. My raincoat is a glorious, garish orange. The men blink when they gaze in my direction. They cannot dull me. No wonder Orthodox women dress so well. It's their way of fighting invisibility.

Fred tells me, "I wish I had the courage to wear loud clothes, but I'm shy. I respect your bright outfit." I know he's saying he cannot talk out but recognizes my right to take a stand. He tells jokes to ease the strain, another God joke:

> Irving wants to win the Lotto. He looks in the paper one day, another day, one week, another week, month after month. He prays, "Please, God, let me win today." He does not win.
>
> "Why, O Lord?" he cries. "Why not me? Why can't I win the Lotto like all the others?"
>
> The sky parts, there is a great light, and a voice thunders, "Irving, meet me halfway. Buy a ticket."

## February 25

The third *mekhitza* is in place—a doubled-over lace curtain hanging from the old shower hooks. Schlomo, the hippie-turned-Hasid, tells the rabbi that he wants to say *kaddish* for his father but that he can see my face, which spoils it for him. The rabbi's kind face is before me, his hand raised. I duck, thinking he is going to strike. He does in a way. He draws the drapes. On the other side the men are shadows. I, on my side, must also be a shadow. The shower hook slips so that the

rabbi is stuck there attaching it while I try to say *kaddish,* distracted by his hovering over me. I leave the shul chilled, as if a funeral sheet were pulled over my face, or a bridal veil were tied over my head, or a chador were hung over my entire body.

## February 27

This morning Joshua leans forward and says, "Don't you know you are sowing dissent? You are spoiling the services." He is hissing now. "You should know a woman's place." I lift the curtain to look at him. I have heard the men giggling about "the colored *fegele.*" "Don't you know, Joshua," I whisper, "that in this place we are both women?"

He looks at me with hatred. His gaze shifts quickly, fearfully to those on his side of the curtain.

Oh, Joshua, we are both freaks. Why can't we shake on it?

The joker is desperately thinking up another joke to make me laugh. Fred tells his joke, a Miami joke:

> In Miami a man and a woman are sitting at the side of the pool. They're both elderly, but she has a nice tan while he's a pasty white. "Why do you look so sick?" she asks him. "I've been in jail," he says. "Really? What on earth for?" "For killing my wife," he tells her. She looks at him. "Then that means you're single," she says.

I don't laugh. Is this about killing women and still being forgiven?

The *shamash* bawls me out seriously today.

"This *keddusha* is the holiest of prayers. Look at your posture, one foot in front of the other, slouching. Stand like a soldier, Madam. You're facing the Almighty."

"*Shamash,*" says the rabbi, "Not so rough."

"The *shamash* is right," I say. "He honored me by observing me, first of all, and, second, by correcting me."

## March 6

We wait a long time for a minyan. The rabbi and the professor are both late. The rabbi had taken the professor to the Emergency Room. He had fallen, wrenching his shoulder and breaking his arm. He is a stern man, a distinguished professor emeritus.

But I stop in the rabbi's office and see the professor sitting there, arm in a sling, shoelaces dangling. I bend to tie his laces. "No!" he says. I ignore his objections and retie the laces. "So you won't trip," I say. I am crouched there, when I suddenly feel his hand upon my head. I look up, surprised: he has avoided glance and touch these weeks. "Thank you," he says, his eyes full of tears. "We're here to help each other," I tell him.

I begin to see that this little *shteeble* is full of lonely, elderly widowers or single men, their days stretching emptily before them.

I am beginning to feel secure enough in this place to take action.

I write to a group of women friends:

> Dear Minyan Mates,
> As most of you know I have been saying *kaddish* for my father for seven weeks at an Orthodox shul. It's been an education for all of us, I who am counted or discounted as half a man, the others who thought they were safe on an island of males.
>
> I now need you, my sisters. I wish to have a minyan of women to attend the morning service on Sunday, March 29.
>
> I want them to know that where I stand, a shadow extends. I want them to know that we women are there, and we will invade to honor our dead.

## March 23

The professor rushes over to ask me about my ailing mother's health. I look across the room—the sun bright, the morning about forty-six degrees—and I think that I really love about half a dozen men in this room, like going to camp and loving your bunkmates. How can I ever explain this feeling to my cofeminist friends?

The professor and Fred invite me to join them afterward for coffee—that's Instant in a styrofoam cup. The professor, still in pain from his broken arm, says, in his formal manner, "I wanted to tell you, Madam, that what Rabbi Ornstein did when he so attacked you was wrong. We talked about it afterward, and we all felt bad for you. And we want you to know how welcome, even liked, even well-liked, you are, and that we hope that after your time of *kaddish* you continue to join us."

## March 25

Our cranky *shamash,* shaking his cane, is walking less steadily. I help him down the stairs, and he puts his cane ahead of him, off the stair, and leans on that cane in the air. If I do not hold onto his arm, he will slide down the whole flight.

Grace Paley phoned worriedly yesterday. She's concerned about my "action" at shul. Grace said, "The object of politics is peaceful transformation. I worry that what you are doing Sunday will hurt matters, not help them."

## March 29

A great day. We women begin jamming in. The men trickle in slowly, not even a minyan by 9:00 A.M. But my women have risen early, schlepped down from the Upper

*(Continued on p. 90)*

*For the past several years America has been engaged in a fierce debate about whether it has any shared values upon which to build a unified community. While many liberals, on civil liberties grounds, have resisted the imposition of values and have championed the notion that values may be context-bound, subjective, and relative,* Tikkun *has taken a different perspective, insisting that a transformative social vision must base itself on a foundational ethics that transcends individual differences.*

*That debate has taken a unique form in the academy, where university professors have debated the legitimacy of continuing a single "Western Civilization" requirement that would impose one particular set of books as "the canon" of Western thought. Feminists, Blacks, and Jews have been amongst those who have pointed to the class, race, sex, and religious biases of those who have helped create this "canon." The debate at Stanford, in particular, received national attention, and Professor Arnold Eisen describes how the conflict affected him.*

*The problems raised by the whole issue of a shared literature are made even more acute when we listen to Professor Hannan Hever describe how this notion has been used in Israel as a way to delegitimate the cultural contributions of Palestinian authors. Hever's piece provides an important perspective and warning for those of us who wish to develop an alternative canon that would, presumably, at some point become authoritative.*

# Jews, Jewish Studies, and the American Humanities

*Arnold Eisen*

Stanford University has received more than its fair share of national media attention these past three years—principally because of the debate over its required core curriculum in "Western culture." I was greeted by the opening salvos of that debate during my very first days on campus in 1986, and the argument is still front-page news in the *Stanford Daily* (and grist for national editorial columns) as I write, in the summer of 1989.

I observed the discussion as a professing Jew and a professor of Judaism; what is more, I came to it engaged in establishing a new program in Jewish studies. The debate made several questions about the program's prospects particularly urgent. For example, how does one teach a religious tradition built around books, and the history of a people known universally as the "people of the book," at a place where the centrality of texts has been collectively repudiated? Moreover, would there be room for the dispassionate study of a culture that reeks of authority, hierarchy, exclusivism, and "God-talk" in a setting where all of these things are widely denounced as not only anachronistic but pernicious? I do not affirm any faith claims when I teach the history of Judaism, any more than I affirm Marx or Nietzsche when teaching their thought. But I do enter into my subject as sympathetically as possible. More important, I take its claims with utmost seriousness. Religion, for many of my colleagues outside religious studies, is at best antiquarian, at worst a breeding ground for fanaticism. Would that be their attitude toward Jewish studies as well? Could students be brought to take seriously what the majority of their professors might not?

And yet: would there be room for Jewish studies at all in the American university were it not for parallel efforts to establish Black studies, feminist studies, and Chicano studies—efforts spearheaded by many of the very people who find my commitments so retrograde? Indeed, would there be room for the Jewish tradition in any conception of Western culture not fractured by modernity and modernism—fractured in part by Jews struggling for space within its confines? Such questions pose themselves still more concretely. What am I to do with the fact that my liberal political allies often speak a cultural language that I find profoundly disturbing (as in the Stanford debate), while other people, whose politics I oppose, articulate a way of being and teaching that stirs me deeply? I have been welcomed warmly at Stanford, and Jewish studies too has been greeted with enthusiasm. The program symbolizes inclusiveness,

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growth, cosmopolitanism. A Jew, of course, rejoices at being at home in a place like Stanford; but he or she cannot easily take "yes" for an answer, and soon wonders whether home is really a good place for Jews to be. The debate about the curriculum at Stanford, then, brought me quickly to the deepest paradoxes of Jewish life in the modern world. The baggage of the last two centuries had trailed me to Palo Alto.

Hence the following meditation which arises out of events at Stanford, responds to Allan Bloom and other commentators on American higher education, and articulates the dilemmas of a self-consciously modern Jewish professor of Judaism. I am looking for a place to stand, if such a place exists, in the American academy of our day. I search for balance.

## Stanford

Item: I read in the October 8, 1986, issue of *Campus Report*—the faculty/staff newspaper at Stanford—that Clayborne Carson, associate professor of history and Afro-American studies, has questioned whether the focus of the core curriculum "should be on Western culture at all." It is not enough, he argues, to note that such a course excludes "most of the world's population that doesn't happen to be Western, doesn't happen to be Christian, doesn't happen to have developed in the same ways that this country has developed.... [I]t's not enough to simply say that these groups should be included and maybe we should have some [class] sections off to the side." Perhaps, instead, we should change what stands at the center, move "toward a world culture requirement, one that would begin to expose students to the cultural diversity that exists in the world today."

I am, up to a point, sympathetic to this argument; but beyond that point I find myself profoundly hostile. On pedagogic grounds, the proposal is unworkable: how can one study everything, or even many things, and avoid superficiality? Furthermore, on philosophical grounds, I am unwilling to give up on the notion of a common culture that unites us as Americans, however mythic the usable past, however many wrongs have been perpetrated in the name of that myth. America began and developed out of a commitment to a particular set of ideas that thereby demand and deserve our continuing engagement. Students *should* be exposed to cultures other than their own, and exposed in depth; but I find it inconceivable for us to allow anyone to graduate without having read Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Marx, Freud—precisely the sort of thinkers on the core list, which Carson urges us to eliminate. These thinkers continue to shape our social and political thought—indeed, they shape the very debate over curriculum in which we are engaged. Could we really certify as educated a student who had not confronted them?

And yet, of course, I am a Jew, which means in this instance that Carson's words immediately strike a sympathetic chord. Resentment at the pretensions of Western (read: Christian) culture to universality is well known to me. I remember arguing repeatedly with my fellow teachers of Contemporary Civilization at Columbia—CC being the source for Stanford's core curriculum, and many others—over whether the Bible, let alone Maimonides, deserved inclusion on the list. "There are no arguments there," a graduate student in philosophy objected. An eminent historian did my cause no good by arguing before this same group that the Bible should be included by dint of its legacy to the West: genocide, persecution of witches, abhorrence of homosexuals. But, damn it (my anger is easily recalled), what of the fact that a majority of the world's Jews, Christians, and Muslims continue to find their deepest meaning rooted in the Bible? What of its importance for Western cultures, elite and popular alike, for two millennia? The Bible remained on the list. But, except for my section, no postbiblical Jew ever appeared.

Still, Western culture is part of my inheritance now. I treasure the CC list, even if it excludes me, as I treasure Melville and Hawthorne, Jefferson and Lincoln. I want my students to treasure them too. Hence my reaction to Carson's proposal: I stand with him—but I also stand against him.

Item: John Perry, professor of philosophy, one of the architects of the old Western culture curriculum, and soon to be a principal advocate of its replacement with CIV—"Cultures, Ideas, Values"—makes two comments, in reply to Carson, that underlie many critiques of the core. First, we probably do not possess the works of the truly great philosophers, because to be a philosopher means to pick holes in arguments, including one's own. Perry says: "So maybe the best philosopher that ever lived never got around to writing anything, because every time he wrote something he said, You know, that's not quite right." Perry is not speaking entirely seriously, I grant, but the message conveyed is serious indeed. To do philosophy, by his definition, means above all to pick arguments apart, not to put them together. It means, in a word, to be critical. Second, Perry argues, the problem of relativism will not go away: "There is no way to have knowledge, to perceive anything, to think anything, to read anything except from a perspective. You can't step out of your perspective.... There are ways of overcoming relativism, but it's not necessarily easy."

Perry set his students face to face with one of the thorniest issues of our time, and left them where the university generally leaves them: in doubt. All claims to truth do strike us as suspicious. Scientific detach-

ment enters into our daily decisions; unprecedented self-consciousness bedevils and enriches our personal relationships; suspicion is part and parcel of our lives. Taken together, Perry's two points are particularly devastating. In the name of truth, all truth must be "picked apart." Yet all truth, including this one, is contingent, perspectival, by no means absolute.

Where does this combination of criticism and relativism leave us? For the average Stanford student, Perry's culture of criticism is far from enough—particularly since we can no longer expect students to arrive on campus armed with commitments from home, school, or church that we can refine (and so preserve) through criticism. Integral communities are in short supply in America these days, and so are the deep-seated commitments that they once fostered. "Values" are easily exchanged and sloughed off—a process not always salutary if nothing coherent is around to replace them.

The deep dilemmas that afflict our culture find graphic expression in the university curricula as well. Take the catalogue of courses, for example, which stands before the student symbolically as the sum total of human knowledge. We ask undergraduates to choose from among thousands of courses without the benefit of much structure or advising (except in the sciences, where course work is very highly structured indeed). At best an ordered collection of courses results, at worst intellectual vertigo. Students quickly realize that the faculty members are unable to agree on what is worth knowing or teaching. These students learn almost as quickly that anything held worthwhile by some group at some time has been reviled by other societies and cultures. By finals week of fall quarter, freshman year, all have discovered that critical skills are what is rewarded in the academy, while claims to truth are treated as suspect both in the classroom and in the dorm.

A person committed to Judaism cannot help being disturbed by this pervasive relativism. For the Jewish tradition, despite the enormous diversity it contains, is united in the belief that (I quote Martin Buber, far from an Orthodox Jew!) "there is truth and there are lies ... there is right and [there is] wrong." Universities today write moral statements, if they write them at all, only in lowercase, surrounded by quotation marks, in the form of open questions.

In the end, the Western culture debate resulted in a compromise that includes a sort of core composed of texts or issues while mandating consideration of gender, race, and class. Contemplating this result, I reflected that Jews had traded an integral communal culture in return for participation as individuals in a very rough but quite fragmented Western culture. Jewish studies had arrived at nearly every major university in America, and at many minor ones, but literacy in Jewish texts, except among a small elite, had become a thing of the past. Universities for their part had been democratized and opened to influences other than the dominant culture. Hence the presence of Jews and Judaism. But here, too, much had been lost: a sense of collective direction, the ability to tell our students what matters and what does not, the confidence that we assist in the building of a common national culture. Perplexed, I read *Campus Report* week by week, argued with colleagues, went to meetings, and became still more perplexed. Enter at that point Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987)—an attempt, outrageous but compelling, to guide me (us) through the complexity. It served as a sort of silent partner to inner dialogue, prompting in the end a very different vision of the humanities, and of Jewish studies.

## The American Mind

My experience may be atypical, but I have rarely heard *The Closing of the American Mind* treated seriously. Reviews have tended either to relish Bloom's bashing of liberal culture or to bash right back with similar abandon. Discussions at the university have more often than not sought to account for the book's popularity—itself a sign of ill-repute among academics—rather than to attempt to engage Bloom's arguments. I find this response curious. There is much in the book that is on the mark, even if there is also a great deal that is doubtful, patently wrong, and even (as with attacks on figures such as Margaret Mead) downright puerile.

The object of Bloom's critique is not higher education at all, but rather the society and culture that our universities reflect and serve. Note, first, that Bloom insists—like the tradition in which he places himself, like the tradition in which I place myself—on discourse about the soul. One is immediately forced to take sides. Either this sort of language is merely quaint, or it is utterly serious. Bloom's essay is awash with "soul" and other archaisms of similar import. "The teacher ... must constantly try to look toward the goal of human completeness." "The real motive of education" is "the search for a good life." And, in a moving personal confession, which I willingly echo:

> [T]he substance of my being has been informed by the books I learned to care for.... I have had teachers and students such as dreams are made [of]. And most of all I have friends with whom I can share thinking about what friendship is, with whom there is a touching of souls and in whom works that common good of which I have just spoken.

This is the discourse of Aristotle, and of Jewish texts

such as Pirke Avot. It is not, to say the least, the contemporary language of the academy.

This is so for two reasons. First, Western philosophy since Kant has not managed to assent even to the limited claims to knowledge and truth left standing in the wake of Kant's critiques. Where Bloom presupposes "that there is a human nature, and that assisting its fulfillment is [the teacher's] task," much recent work in the humanities assumes that every notion of human nature is an artificial construct, and inquires into its origins and purpose. Similarly, where Bloom makes reason the principal instrument of human fulfillment, philosophers in the West from Hegel onward have taught us to doubt reason. Hegel himself, charting the purported progress of reason through history, serves only to highlight reason's cultural particularity. Marx teaches us how seemingly universal notions have often served the interests of specific classes; Freud makes the fragility of reason all too obvious. Bloom himself places this development even earlier than Kant: "Having cut off the higher aspirations of man, those connected with the soul, Hobbes and Locke hoped to find a floor beneath him, which Rousseau removed. Man tumbled down into what I have called the basement, which now appears bottomless." We need not accept Bloom's putative history, or mine, to recognize that old-fashioned talk of human nature seems out of place in today's university.

"Soul" and similar terms are excluded for a second reason as well: our emphasis on material forces in history. Bloom has the habit of attributing all historical development to the history of ideas. Thus he regards the loss of a "floor," of a firm grounding for our beliefs and our lives, as the crucial determinant of modernity. Here we were, his story goes, about to embark on the distinctively modern project of mastering the world for the benefit of the human species, but the enormous energies unleashed from the Reformation to the Enlightenment could not propel us—for we no longer possessed a sense of direction to tell us where to go.

Critics have correctly observed that Bloom's shorthand history is inaccurate. Economic, political, and sociological developments cannot be captured by the history of ideas, let alone by the history of the ideas contained in a few works judged by Bloom to be epochal. Other voices had their say; other forces were at work. Hence the disrepute at present of the history of ideas, and the crucial role of this issue in the Stanford debate. Bloom, in a sense, argues as follows: If truth, wisdom, and goodness exist, we should certainly be seeking them; if reason is the best way to conduct that search, perfection of reason should be our overriding educational aim. Universities should be conducted accordingly. Methodological questions about history are irrelevant. To which his critics retort: If Bloom has ignored many if not most American minds in his rush to judge our moral situation, if his causal sequence is utterly simplistic, if indeed he has ignored the institutional history of the American university (the move from liberal arts colleges serving a limited clientele of gentlemen to research universities entangled in a variety of societal interests and serving a broad mix of constituencies), then his formulation of the questions facing higher education is inadequate. And, besides, Bloom's critics continue, the forces that want to speak of "soul" in the old-fashioned way usually bear agendas out of keeping with the critical function served by the university.

We are left, then, with the question of what the role of the university should be. Or, in Max Weber's terms, what is the vocation of scholarship?

Recent literature tends toward one of two positions on this question. On the one hand, voices from the left and right alike propose a reinvigoration of the purist educational model of the university. Jacques Barzun, once the provost at Columbia, puts it this way: "Students learn, teachers teach and learn some more." More direct involvements with society—including those aimed at public service—are to be avoided. Paul Goodman, whose classic *The Community of Scholars* (1962) continues to move me greatly, urges that we view colleges and universities as the only face-to-face, self-governing communities still active in modern society. Students and faculty may come to their shared community with different agendas, but the essence of their activity is personal relation and personal growth. Clark Kerr, former chancellor at the University of California at Berkeley, urges that we "pay [our] devotions to truth."

How valid is this purist view? I ask this question for several reasons. First, the contemporary research university is far from a detached ivory tower. Not only do its investments support all sorts of corporate activity, and not only do its researchers perform the bidding of countless government agencies, but its faculty members tend more and more to hold equity in or serve as consultants to outside companies. The web of connections between university, on the one hand, and government and industry, on the other, is far too dense for any pure teacher-student relationship to slip through without entanglement.

Second, recent work in the philosophy of social science has cast serious doubt upon the premise of value-neutral research and teaching. The university cannot help but take a stand on the issues of the day, if only by deciding in which to interfere, which to scrutinize. Moreover, the very construction of our disciplines, our notion of what is worth knowing and teaching, contains assumptions that others might find highly questionable.

Third—and most relevant to the present discussion—the university itself usually proclaims a desire to further the *particular* values and institutions of American society. The Commission on the Humanities, for example, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation at the start of this decade, spoke of the twin goals of personal enrichment and civic responsibility—language often found in the self-description of contemporary universities, including my own. It urged professors to "prepare students for citizenship by teaching the democratic values that have shaped the American heritage."

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*I am unwilling to give up on the notion of a common culture that unites us as Americans.*

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The view espoused by many of Bloom's critics is summarized in the American Council of Learned Societies' (ACLS) Report on the Humanities, which appeared this year in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The report opposes any vision of

> disciplines governed by a gentlemanly ideal: a vision of the humanities as repository of known truths and received values, which a non-professional corps of collectors present to the young. The humanities are better conceived as fields of exploration and critique rather than materials for transmission. If such a view promotes a divided and contentious future it is, we believe, an engaging and productive one.

A distinctly modernist credo, this, a celebration of freedom from the constraints of consensus. It is the "lust for knowledge, unsatisfied delight in discovery, tremendous secularization, homeless roving" that Nietzsche prophesied in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The message is succinct: criticize, by all means explore, but do not seek to serve a culture except by exposing it and everything else to relentless criticism.

I find this view disturbing. Like Bloom, I do not advocate that we begin to teach civics at Stanford or that we sacrifice one iota of our critical function to patriotism. One can maintain academic freedom at the same moment as one places the intellectual inside our common culture, as part of our society. This is a matter of tone, of ethos, as much as of substance; but substance too is often at issue. Note for example the notion of tradition as dead letter opposed by free spirit, which permeates the ACLS report. This idea is a staple of modernist ideology, a far cry from the dialectic of creativity and authority that characterizes every living tradition I know of.

Bloom is on firm ground, it seems to me, in urging the university to be critical of the culture of criticism that surrounds and infuses it. Moreover, his impressionistic account of the ethos of American life accords, despite his lack of "hard" evidence, both with other "soft" accounts such as *Habits of the Heart* (1985) or *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) and with survey data collected by Daniel Yankelovich and Herbert Gans. All confirm what Bloom calls the "dreary spiritual landscape" of all too many American families. The nation does have its Falwells and the world its ayatollahs; academic freedom must still be safeguarded. But it is now the modernists who stand with the most powerful cultural forces in our society, and who reinforce the antitraditional tendencies of our culture, high and low.

Bloom's proposals for reform are far less satisfactory than his critique. He has virtually no answer to our dilemmas beyond great books and a commitment by our cultural elite to the Greek academy's pursuit of truth through reason. That vision of higher education must be adapted to the realities of the far more democratic American system. No self-respecting Jew, certainly, can endorse the "gentlemanly ideal," which had no room for Jews; I suspect that no democrat (small "d") can either. We must try to do better than Bloom.

On one matter, however, Bloom seems correct: humanists will regain their former primacy in the university only if they can come to some agreement on what is worth knowing and why. Scientists largely agree on what needs to be taught, and social scientists, too, continue to believe in and search for "the facts." The only ground for similar agreement by humanists would seem to involve commitment to shared notions of humanity and truth—notions that are not merely ethnocentric or ephemeral, even if they are not subject to rational proof either. Coming to such agreement is no easy task—but Max Weber, I believe, provides a starting point in "Science as a Vocation."

## Scholarship as a Vocation

Convinced that "scientific progress is a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization" that had succeeded in "disenchanting" the world, Weber was no longer able to give credence to any of the reigning rationales for scholarship. Science as a path to God? That position could no longer be taken seriously. A path to meaning in life? "Who ... still believes that the findings of astronomy, biology, physics, or chemistry could teach us anything about the meaning of the world?" A way to happiness? Mere "naive optimism." The presupposition that what scholarship teaches is worth knowing, Weber argued, was itself beyond proof; this because "the various

value-spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other.... [D]ifferent gods struggle with one another, now and for all times to come." Science could not arbitrate this dispute; relativism was a hard fact of existence. And what could it mean to speak of "vocation" in a context deprived of ultimate meaning?

I find Weber a useful starting point because he *did* find a vocation for the university. People had to live somehow in the disenchanted world, and it still mattered to Weber, a Kantian to the end, that they live responsibly, doing their "damned duty." The university could help: by teaching students "inconvenient facts," helping them move toward clarity, informing them of possible ends and of the means necessary "to carry out [their] convictions practically." The university stood "in the service of self-clarification and the knowledge of interrelated facts."

"Science as a Vocation," I confess, is the most powerful essay I have ever encountered, for two reasons: it compellingly limits and challenges the religious faith I have managed to secure, and it expresses my own misgivings about the role of the university in society while nonetheless finding meaning in that role. My task as a Jew is somehow to get beyond Weber's relativism, to affirm what he could not. This task is of course assisted by scholarly criticism that exposes Weber's own blind spots and presuppositions. My task as a professor of Judaism in the university is more modest: to see if Weber's attempt to get around his own predicament may prove of use to us as well.

I begin with several easy steps suggested by the Commission on the Humanities. Suppose we reaffirm, as it does, that the ultimate point of study in the humanities is to "reflect on the fundamental question: what does it mean to be human?" Suppose we further assume that certain methods of inquiry are peculiarly well-suited to this aim, methods that the commission describes as "language, dialogue, reflection, imagination, and metaphor." Finally, let us agree with the commission that such study cannot be limited to texts, but neither can it proceed without placing great emphasis on texts. The humanities have ample room for both "elite" and "popular" culture, and our notions of the human must extend to every corner of space and time.

The first implication of these ground rules would seem to be the blurring of the very definition of humanities that the commission proposed—precisely as Weber would have wished. For if we accept Weber's notion of our shared vocation, essentially endorsed by the commission, we must grant that science is an integral part of any reflection on what it means to be human. For what it means for me to be a person cannot be asked with integrity in the absence of what physics, chemistry, and biology have to teach us, any more than it can be asked in the absence of economics, psychology, or political science.

We thus arrive at a set of curricular decisions that involve the sciences and social sciences no less than the humanities, even if we reserve to the humanities the roles of reflecting upon the inquiry as a whole and of integrating the results of the three components. We arrive, too, at a model of research that engages all the disciplines in the reflection traditionally reserved for the humanist. It is worthwhile to be as concrete as possible here. What it is to be a person depends upon knowledge about the human body. Consensus concerning such knowledge comes from the scientific disciplines; while that consensus leaves room for more than one picture of humanness, no such picture deserves our attention unless it takes "the facts" as the scientists understand them into account. The same could be said of our role as humans in the food chain or of our place as earthlings in the universe. Further, given that we are not only bodies but social beings and language users, other sorts of questions, apportioned to the social sciences and humanities, also make their claim—particularly the impact upon our reflection of the particular time and place in which we conduct it. Given, finally, that we fortunately do not have to begin this inquiry from the beginning, but are heirs to thousands of years of human speculation upon this topic, we should expose our students and ourselves to at least a sample of that treasury.

There is more than one way to pursue this end. I find all too little diversity in American higher education and only minimal attempts at curricular innovation. The reasons are not far to seek: professors are more interested in (and rewarded for) other things, while students are generally satisfied if they leave college with the foothold on the career ladder that college has promised to afford them if they can afford its tuition. No less, the question of how we should teach has fallen victim to our uncertainty about what good our teaching does. So we rarely try to make significant changes. Instead, we tinker with what we have.

This approach will not do. Undergraduate education is at present highly disorganized. Students are generally free to graduate illiterate in science and math, largely ignorant of any culture (high or low, including their own), and unable to put together, except haltingly, the jumble of facts and methods that they have encountered. Few integrative senior seminars exist to assist them; few professorial role models can point the way.

Students would be better served by more structure, more core—but structure conceived pluralistically and core that includes more than the list of ten great books that Bloom or Weber or I myself find most important.

For example, students could be offered a series of structured options, which would include all the tools that we deem necessary for thinking about the meaning of being human, and which would seek to integrate these tools. Detailed consideration would be given to the history and ideas at the root of American culture (including exposure to debate over what this history and these ideas actually are).

Students would also be required to gain knowledge of at least one other way of being human, developed in another time and place and couched in another language, which they would be required to learn. The university would insist upon basic mathematical and scientific literacy and would accord central importance to the reading and analysis of texts (for such reading has proven over the centuries its unique power to guide debate on issues of deepest importance) and to the development of analytic skills. No one would be forced into any particular option, but, having chosen it, each student would be bound by its structure. No two universities would offer exactly the same options, which would enlarge enormously the range of choice available.

Such a proposal combines a rather traditional view of the university as focused on the problem of being human (How shall we live? Where shall we find truth? What do we owe ourselves, our societies, our planet?) with an extension of the American university's insistence on science and technology as a crucial feature of that inquiry. More important, this proposal affirms the notion that universities can stand apart from the reigning certainties (and uncertainties) of their cultures and societies without pretending to be value neutral and without sacrificing their commitment to fundamental human and societal norms.

There is no place in the university for proselytizing—political, religious, or ethnic. I do not stand before my students to make them better Jews—difficult in any event because half the students who study Jewish history or texts at Stanford are not Jews. Weber was absolutely right on this score. Special pleading is incompatible with the vocation of the university. But: how sad if the deepest concerns of our students find no echo in the classroom, if any culture or thinker of depth is presented without reference to universal concerns that guide us too—friendship and love, truth and conscience, God, death, the world to come. How much sadder if this occurs in classes on religion.

I find in the Jewish tradition of history and text what Bloom finds in Plato and Aristotle: an avenue along which human wisdom can be sought and sometimes found. I hope to enable my students to discover, as Paul Goodman puts it in *The Community of Scholars,* "that some portion of the objective culture is after all naively their own; it is usable by them; it is humane, comprehensible and practicable, and it communicates with everything else. The discovery flashes with spirit." I am grateful that Jewish studies has become widely available to Jewish students, and I believe it no less important that Stanford offer similar opportunities to women, Blacks, Asian Americans, and other minorities who until now have placed themselves in front of the university's mirror and have found they were not there.

Jewish studies exemplifies the sorts of commitments that I have outlined, at a time in the history of the American university when these commitments face serious challenge. This is so, first of all, in the commitment to text as such. Textual study, whether the texts be "classic" or modern, involves a care for the word, a demand for depth rather than breadth, a command to go slowly where others have gone before. This is a far more traditional exercise than others in the academy, suited to—and formative of—a different sort of temper. It breathes the air of bygone ages. Some would dismiss the enterprise for that reason. I value it all the more.

The same holds true for the core list—which must always return, in the study of the Jews, to the set of texts and issues that commanded Jews for centuries. Stanford English Professor Herbert Lindenberger, in a recent account of the CIV debate, notes approvingly that no permanent core list was retained, "in order that no trace of sacrality could attach itself to this list." His essay in fact bears the title "On the Sacrality of Reading Lists." I think he is correct in his assessment—in the strict sense of sacrality, which he did not intend. I, however, would like to attach as much sacrality to the human quest for meaning as possible. I would not like to strip the academy of the trappings of sacrality that attach to it still, despite our suspicion of claims to sacredness. And if Jewish studies in particular and religious studies in general provide a critical, intellectual setting in which questions about God and ultimate meaning can be addressed, I trust that my colleagues, in the name of inclusiveness, will agree that there is room even for these disciplines.

The presence of Jews and Judaism in the academy, then, may well do more than add yet another set of courses to the catalogue and yet another set of conferences to the calendar. It may contribute to debate within the academy about the nature and purpose of humanistic learning. It may also contribute texts and perspectives to the "core curriculum" of Judaism, a product of the intellectual forces and dilemmas that the Stanford debate has come to symbolize. □

THE CANON AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

# Israeli Literature's Achilles' Heel

*Hannan Hever*

During the last two decades, literature written by Israel's Arab minority has slowly begun to infiltrate the Hebrew literary canon. From the far-off margins of the culture of the Arab ethnic minority it is gradually percolating into the authoritative culture of the majority. Stories and poems written by Israeli Arab writers appear regularly in translation—not just in literary magazines or left-of-center reviews, but in literary supplements of the large-circulation dailies. Names such as Siham Daoud and Samih al-Qasim are now known to a broad spectrum of Israelis. Publishing houses have also shown an increasing interest in bringing Hebrew translations of Israeli Arab literature to the attention of the Israeli public.

Another stage in this evolving literary relationship may be seen in recent attempts by Israeli Arab writers actually to compose their works in Hebrew. From the perspective of power relations, it is striking that the more that the Arab minority in Israel reinforces its Palestinian identity, the more it makes its presence felt within the majority Hebrew culture. Especially today, in the shadow of the intifada, one cannot fail to see how the invigorating effects of political action are manifested not only in the strengthening of Palestinian identity, but in a rejection of the marginal status formerly stamped upon Israeli Arab literature by the majority culture.

The seeds of the present situation go back to 1967. Six months before the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, the Eshkol government decided to abolish the military rule still imposed on certain Arab populations within Israel. But the war introduced an entirely new dynamic: Israelis, suddenly confident after their sweeping military victory, regarded their own Arab citizens as still less of a threat. At the same time, however, the self-perception of the Israeli Arabs started to change. The distinctions between them and the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza began to decrease (as much in their own eyes as in those of the Israeli annexationists), and the Arab minority grew in strength and assertiveness. The political changes and the strengthening of Palestinian identity in the territories have thus increased the Israeli Arabs' sense of cultural potency.

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## THE DETERRITORIALIZATION OF LANGUAGE

The literature of any ethnic minority takes up a fundamentally oppositionist stance within the majority culture, even though this oppositionism rarely appears in a pure or unambiguous form. This oppositionism in cultural politics is what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have called "minor literature." This literary and cultural approach is expressed in plot, style, and even characterization. But it is manifested most clearly in the way it deals with the relationship between the language of the majority literature and the national territory. The close tie between language and territory is, as many writers have pointed out, a fundamental element of modern nationalism. From the perspective of the national minority, however, this close tie offers invaluable potential for challenging the majority culture. Through what Deleuze and Guattari call "the deterritorialization of language," the minority literature seeks to break the bond that the majority literature has attached between language and territory. The ability of the minority to turn this territorial link against the ruling majority is conspicuous even when one glances casually at some of the Arabic texts recently translated into Hebrew—for example, the following poem by Shukieh Arouk:

### A Letter

Somebody sent a letter
From Heaven to Earth.
The letter landed on the olive tree of longing
Next to the checkpoint roadblock.
Take away the lines,
Erase the word "homeland".
Nothing will reach the relatives
Except for red lines.

In his novel *Akhtayyeh,* Emil Habibi expresses his anxiety about "the existence within this land of the freedom to yearn for this land." The author's assault on this seemingly natural bond between language and territory is expressed via his references to the original Arab names of Haifa streets. Again and again, Habibi's story illuminates the critical and alienated perspective of the Arab minority toward the Hebrew world being spun around it:

> Here al-Nasra Street turned into Israel Bar-Yehuda Street; and King Faisal Square, in front of the Hejazi railroad station, has become Golani Brigade Street. Only in Arabic the name—as on most of the signs in the country—is misspelled: *Khatibat Julani,* which means "Golani's Betrotheds." And I, before I acquired the requisite military knowledge, thought that this Golani was some Hebrew Don Juan who had many girlfriends, but out of politeness they were all called his betrotheds.

Another example of this deterritorialization of language appears in Siham Daoud's poem "I Press The Letters To My Lips," in which she founds an alternative territory whose existence acts as a continual protest over the territory she has lost:

> O my land, I see my voice as the cycle of the seasons,
> A kind of memory that resides in children;
> And the letters of the alphabet
> Are like borders without darkness and earthquakes,
> A sort of scroll of time that teaches me to read maps
> And a memorial prayer to the soul of freedom.

## Shamas and Habibi

The appearance of Anton Shamas's Hebrew novel *Arabesques* was an event in the history of Hebrew letters and an act of literary provocation in the anesthetized majority culture. It succeeded in fundamentally challenging some of the conventional wisdom concerning the boundaries of Hebrew literature. One of the central conflicts in the novel takes place between the protagonist—the writer Anton Shamas himself, who in the story travels to the United States to participate in an international writing program—and the Jewish Israeli writer Yehoshua Bar-On, whose apparent liberalism dissolves during the course of the novel to reveal underlying prejudice. While Bar-On expresses empathy for Shamas's position as a minority writer, a position that reminds him of the situation of Jewish writers in the Diaspora, he nonetheless refers to Shamas as "my Jew," and his empathy at times gives way to the standard discrimination of a paternalistic majority.

This Jewish-Arab confrontation allows Shamas to deal with the complicated question of cultural identity and to expose, *inter alia,* the Israeli habit of speech (and thought), which serves to blur the distinction between Israeli and Jew. (No doubt this feature expresses the Israeli schizophrenia whereby a political majority can nonetheless seek to retain the concepts and images of an ethnic minority.) The novel's provocative nature is confirmed by the fact that some Israelis have had difficulty acknowledging that *Arabesques* is an organic part of Hebrew literature.

The challenge Shamas poses in *Arabesques* is evident also in the way he creates and manages his protagonists, particularly in his clever use of twinned characters (doppelgänger) and in his ability to deny the reader any sure means of deciding which character's version of the events is to be accepted. Shamas's novel thus seeks fundamentally to undermine the standards of the narrator's authority as well as those that are supposed to guide the author, who is, after all, responsible for the unreliable narrator.

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*Treating the minority literature as folklore or ethnography is still another tactic adopted by those who want to soothe their liberal and pluralistic consciences.*

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In this manner, Shamas's central characters resemble the hero of Emil Habibi's well-known novel *The Opsimist,* which also violates a number of the standard conventions of minority literature. This picaresque novel recounts the disappearance of Sa'ad Abu al-Nahs al Mutasha'il, the "opsimist" who exists suspended between the world of the living and the dead. He is an "opsimist," he says, because he is unable to distinguish between optimism and pessimism; he manages to survive under the Israeli regime between 1948 and 1967 thanks to some help from outer space, as well as from his own wily devices.

Like Shamas's *Arabesques,* Habibi's novel frustrates his readers' expectations of a plot with a distinct climax and a hero who grapples with his problems and arrives at an autonomous moral and ideological solution. (This technique has been explored by David Lloyd in his work on minor literature in the context of Irish cultural nationalism.) By means of the opsimist's systematic confounding of the normal categories of optimism and pessimism, Habibi counsels his readers to adopt concepts of time and hope radically different from the progressive notion of time characteristic of the culture of the ethnic majority.

An ambivalent doubling structure also underlies Habibi's story "Finally the Almond Blossomed," which depicts a member of the Arab minority who for many years has assiduously cultivated the art of survival and evasion under the rule of the Jewish majority. The story's doubling of cities, places, descriptions of nature, and even patterns of thought and emotion almost rules out the possibility of a stable central character with whom

readers can identify. By virtue of his designation as "Mr. M" (in imitation of Kafka, whose works are frequently the archetype for any study of the literature of ethnic minorities), the hero is presented as a subject with only external functions, devoid of any autonomous moral or philosophical intention. In fact, the climax of the story takes place outside the consciousness of the protagonist, who is unaware that he himself is the friend whose beloved he is seeking. Mr. M's years in Israel between 1948 and 1967, years during which he internalized his identity as a member of the minority race, have stamped their image upon him. His current impotence, despite the new horizons that the Six Day War has opened for him on the other side of the old border, leaves him alienated and alone, deprived of personal and national identity. Habibi's presentation of Mr. M's struggle with his own cautious and evasive identity thus maneuvers the Hebrew reader into an ambivalent position that simultaneously includes elements of superiority and inferiority, acceptance and rejection, vis-à-vis a member of an ethnic minority.

Mr. M, who thus rediscovers his people and himself after June 1967, is also depicted through the analogy with the new Jewish situation and the opening of the territories. In so doing, Habibi makes the Hebrew reader realize that the 1967 War also opened new "territories" for Israeli Arabs. In general, minority literature subjects standard cultural concepts such as "homeland" and "exile" to a process of questioning and reexamination. The hero of Zahi Darwish's story "Winter and Exile" says:

> Because of my limited ability to endure, I sometimes give in to despair and melancholy. I look at the passing clouds opposite my solitary window, as they move eastward with majestic slowness. I follow in their wake, carry my feelings away to the farthest exile—the most difficult one. Exile among strangers is painful; but exile among relatives is like spiritual suicide.

## Collectivism

Another conspicuous trait of minority literature is the systematic collectivism imposed on most details of the real world, including the world of emotions. This collectivism is rightly interpreted, chiefly by readers from the majority culture, as political: systematic politicization is sometimes evident in the sacrifice of the primacy of aesthetic norms such as uniqueness or originality. In fact, a minority literature that maintains its intimate connection with semifolkloristic writing and oral literary traditions can sometimes call into question the whole idea of stories' or novels' centering on individual characters who wrestle with intense moral and emotional conflicts.

For similar reasons, minority literature often adopts various forms of national allegory, which provide a collective dimension to even the most intimate corners of the soul. Zahi Darwish, for example, in his story "The Coat," molds a complex dynamic of father-son relations by means of a national allegory woven around the traditional family coat. This collectivism is rooted, in part, in the fact that the minority recognizes its relative weakness and therefore takes great pains to mobilize almost every possible source of strength.

This all-encompassing self-awareness is likewise evident in an allegorical poem by Samih al-Qasim that melds with great vigor and clarity the themes of love and struggle:

> She sat quietly
> In the corner of the coffeehouse at twilight.
> She waited seven years
> But he did not return to her.
> The cup fell from her hand
> And on the clean bench of the coffeehouse
> Her coffee painted
> A face with rifle and a rose,
> A songbird,
> And a bomb.

## The Canon

Discussions of the relations between ethnic majorities and minorities frequently resort to the language of psychological repression and camouflage. The use of cultural categories such as these is generally based on a quantitative semantics that disguises the nature of the relationship between majority and minority. In other words, it blurs the fact that, first and foremost, power relations are what is at stake. Even the most enlightened democracy, which makes the preservation of minority rights a top priority, cannot eliminate the fundamental inferiority inherent in the minority's relative frailty.

The issue of power relations is evident in the literary canon. The reservoirs of authority that accumulate around the canon, that is, around the group of literary texts that have attained an elite status in a given culture, are an important concretization of cultural power. These are the texts that are disseminated by the society and its institutions, the texts that enjoy support or at least a priori legitimation from prestigious literary critics, the texts that fill the syllabi in schools and universities.

By its very nature, the decision to include certain texts in the canon involves a concomitant decision to exclude other texts. Most Arabic literature written in Israel remains banished from the Israeli canon. One may assume that the disdain of Hebrew readers and critics for Israeli Arab literature also attests to political motivations, not always conscious, that color their aesthetic judgment.

*We invite you to use this supplement to the traditional High Holiday prayer, "Al Kheyt," in your own personal and communal observances.*

On the Jewish High Holidays we take collective responsibility for our lives and for the activities of the community of which we are part.

Although we realize that we did not create the world we were born into, we nevertheless have a responsibility for what it is like as long as we participate in it. Despite the declining plausibility of any external threat to America's military security, we live in a society that pours huge sums of money into military expenditures, self-indulgently squanders a vastly disproportionate share of the resources of the planet, and ignores the plight of the hungry, the homeless, and the poor. Though we personally may not have created these policies, as members of this society we take collective responsibility for these sins.

This year, we are grieved particularly by the situation of our people in the State of Israel. We understand that they did not create the circumstances which now place them in the role of governing over one-and-a-half million Palestinians who wish for their own national self-determination. Jews needed a haven from the oppression they faced in Europe and in Arab lands—but in order to create that refuge, Jews' own needs for national self-determination were set in opposition to the Palestinian people's need for their own homeland. It was reasonable for us to rebuild our original homeland. But we take responsibility as a people for not having done all that we could to resolve the conflict, and for allowing a government in Israel to speak in an arrogant and insensitive manner about those Palestinians who have been uprooted.

Similarly, in our personal lives: we did not choose the particular families, class backgrounds, and circumstances that shaped our personalities in the past, but neither are we passive victims. It's up to us to engage in the process of self-transformation so that we can be who we want to be.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could in the past year, we ask God and each other for collective forgiveness.

# על חטא FOR OUR SINS

וְעַל כּוּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר לָנוּ.

*Ve-al kulam Eloha selikhot, selakh lanu, mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.*

**For all our sins, may the force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.**

For the sins we have committed before you and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignored the social world in which we live;

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward the political and social world that we ignored our own personal spiritual development;

For the sins of accepting the current distribution of wealth and power as unchangeable;

And for the sins of giving up on social change and focusing exclusively on personal advancement and success;

For the sins of feeling so worn out when we heard about oppression that we finally closed our ears;

And for the sins of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty and oppression and violence in this world;

For the sins of participating in a racist society and not dedicating more energy to fighting racism;

And for the sins we have committed by allowing our food and our air to be poisoned;

For the sins of allowing our government to continue the arms race;

And for the sins of squandering the resources of the planet in order to produce frivolous goods;

For the sins of treating our natural environment as though it were merely a resource;

And for the sins of treating animals as though they had no feelings;

For the sins of not challenging sexist institutions and practices;

And for the sins of turning our back on—or participating in—the oppression of gays and lesbians;

For the sins of allowing our society to give low priority to the fight against AIDS and other diseases;

And for the sins of allowing homelessness, poverty, and world hunger to continue;

**For all these sins we ask God and each other to give us the strength to forgive ourselves and each other.**

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for what they did to us when we were children;

And for the sins we have committed by not forgiving ourselves for the ways that we are not all we want to be;

For the sins of having too little compassion for our parents and for other people around us;

And for the sins of not having adequate compassion

for our own limitations;

For the sins of not seeing the spark of divinity within each person we encounter and within ourselves;

And for the sins of not learning from and giving adequate respect to our elders;

For the sins of being jealous and trying to possess and control those whom we love;

And for the sins of not being supportive to others when they felt the insecurity that led them to be jealous and controlling;

For the sins of withholding love and support;

And for the sins of being judgmental of others and ourselves;

For the sins of doubting our ability to love or to get love from others;

And for the sins of thinking we would run out of love if we gave too much of it away or gave it to too many people;

For the sins of not helping singles meet others with whom they might form relationships;

And for the sins of not helping couples work out their difficulties, or for pressuring them to stay in a relationship that was too oppressive;

And for the sins of being defensive and paranoid;

For the sins of not trusting others or ourselves;

on Israel;

For the sins of preventing Palestinian national self-determination;

And for the sins of racism toward Arabs;

For the sins of beating, gassing, shooting, and killing Palestinian children;

And for the sins of keeping Palestinian children from attending their schools;

For the sins of forgetting the victims of Palestinian terrorism;

And for the sins of not allowing ourselves to understand the fear and anger of Israelis;

For the sins of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews;

And for the sins of not speaking up publicly to criticize policies that violate our moral sensibilities;

For the sins of not learning more of our Jewish heritage and never fully experiencing Judaism;

And for the sins of not giving enough time and energy to building the kind of Jewish community we desire;

For the sins of expecting everything to happen without contributing to make it happen;

And for the sins of being critical of Jewish life from a distance rather than from personal involvement and commitment;

# על חטא FOR OUR SINS

And for the sins of fearing to lose ourselves in a commitment to another person or to a cause;

For the sins of insisting that everything we do have a payoff;

And for the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

For the sins of giving double messages and being manipulative;

And for the sins of hurting others to protect our own egos;

וְעַל כּוּלָם אֱלוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

*Ve-al kulam Eloha selikhot, selakh lanu, mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.*

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being treated or criticized unfairly;

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing the Jewish people and Israel when they are acting as oppressors;

For the sins of not recognizing the humanity and pain of the Palestinian people;

And for the sins of not recognizing the humanity and pain of the Israeli people or for blaming everything

For the sins of thinking we are more conscious or more intelligent or more ethical or more politically correct than everyone else;

And for the sins we have committed by being insensitive or demeaning to non-Jews;

For the sins of thinking that everyone else's needs and interests should come before those of our own people;

For the sins of not crediting our intuition, feeling, and rationality;

And for the sins of not taking communal responsibility for child rearing;

For the sins of not taking care of each other;

And for the sins of not having compassion for each other;

For the sins of always having to be right;

And for the sins of focusing only on our sins and not on our strengths and beauties.

**For all these, lord of Forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.**

וְעַל כּוּלָם אֱלוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

*Ve-al kulam Eloha selikhot, selakh lanu, mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.*

One relatively simple method employed by the majority culture in its struggle against the minority culture is ignoring it and banishing it to marginal status. The majority describes the minority's literature as shrill or simplistic, and therefore not worthy of association with the canon of the majority. Another approach taken by the majority culture is acculturation—swallowing up and assimilating the minority culture to the point of eradicating its special character as the literature of "others." Treating the minority literature as folklore or ethnography is still another tactic adopted by those who want to soothe their liberal and pluralistic consciences, but who are not willing to undertake a sensitive and fundamental investigation of the minority's artistic activities. Rather than recognizing the relative nature of their judgments, they maintain a tenacious grip on the distinction between what they define as aesthetic and unaesthetic, cultured and primitive.

In order to move from the remote margins to the canonical center, a minority adopts cultural patterns that bring it ever closer to those of the majority. But in order to infiltrate the majority culture and undermine the restrictive authority of the canon, the minority needs more than a strategy based on the slow and gradual accumulation of power. In order to make the most of its potential from its position of weakness, the minority must locate the soft underbelly of the majority culture—its Achilles' heel.

This minority strategy of locating and attacking the soft underbelly of the majority culture can be seen, for example, in the very fact that authors such as Naim Areidi and Anton Shamas have begun to write in Hebrew. This development calls into question the conventional boundaries of Hebrew literature. The appearance of an anthology such as *Soldiers of Water,* which contains works by a number of Arab poets and writers, attests to another stage in the process whereby the traditional national and ethnic borders of Hebrew literature are being redrawn. For this anthology of translations raises fundamental questions about the role of translation as a mediator between two different cultures. Thus, for example, there is no clear indication whether the works of Naim Areidi included in the book were written originally in Arabic or Hebrew. On a similar note, the lively dispute that erupted recently concerning Anton Shamas's translation of Habibi's *Akhtayyeh* revealed the increasing obfuscation of boundaries between translation and original: between Emil Habibi, the author in the original language, and Emil Habibi, the active collaborator in the translation of his own work, who thereby rewrites it in the language of the majority culture.

By blurring conventional cultural distinctions, the minority literature undermines the absolute validity of the canon established by the majority culture as well as the aesthetic principles that guide it. In so doing, the minority literature also calls into question basic cultural assumptions such as the superiority of original work over imitation, and it emphasizes its own massive dependence on earlier texts. One manifestation of this reliance on earlier texts is the interweaving in minority literature of the folk sayings within the narrative thread; these folk sayings serve an important role by delaying the unraveling of the plot and underscoring its popular and oral sources.

Previously a body of writing that accepted its marginal status in order to preserve its uniqueness, Arabic literature in Israel now poses an increasingly strong challenge to the canon of the majority. The power relations between majority and minority are not logical or static. They are political and historical, and they are therefore subject to change. As the minority literature becomes increasingly cognizant of its potential, it may find its place much closer to the core of the canon. In so doing it will also gradually leave behind its marginal role as the literature of an ethnic minority and will be incorporated—so we may hope—as a legitimate and potent partner in Israeli literature. □


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# Scratching the Belly of the Beast

*Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch*

*For the animal should not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught in with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.*

—Henry Beston

*The appreciation of the separate realities enjoyed by other organisms is not only no threat to our own reality, but the root of a fundamental joy.... [I]t is with this freedom from dogma, I think, that the meaning of the words "celebration of life" becomes clear.*

—Barry Lopez

For five years we have been teaching about our relationship with animals and nature. This essay is the product of that enterprise, which was occasioned by our need to sort out a bizarre and contradictory experiential reality—our relationship with our dog, Bruno. For six years we lived as if in bondage to a tall, seventy-pound German short-haired pointer, bred by experts to be the perfect all-purpose hunting dog—sure of foot, keen of scent, willing to brave tangled underbrush and icy waters to retrieve its prey. The real Bruno was neurotic, cowardly, obsessive, and a constant source of household tension. At three months, however, Bruno had been a cute puppy who caught our attention as he stared out from the cramped confinement of a pet-store cage. The next day he was ours, and was to be ours for six long years.

Respectful of Bruno's noble hunting ancestry (although he himself was both gun-shy and afraid to swim), we tried to give him a chance to exert himself in wooded settings. For a time we dragged our one-year-old child out for daily dog walks after work, until Bruno caught and ate a squealing baby badger.

Bruno's enormous physical skills, out of all proportion to his sense, fueled his every move with anxiety-ridden energy. After discovering he could dig holes, for example, he transformed the small but well-landscaped backyard behind our new house into a series of deep, muddy moon craters, which he then stocked with rotting garbage. Our house had come with a fenced-in yard, but, alas, the fence stopped at four feet, which Bruno learned to take in a single bound. Within days the police arrived to tell us that "the big gray dog" had been spotted by neighbors down the street destroying their garden.

In a state of humiliation for our unneighborly behavior, we spent more than $2,000 in landscaping and fence expenses. And Bruno later managed to gore himself leaping the new pointed wood fence, leading to $800 in vet bills, along with thrice-weekly trips to the vet for most of a summer to have his surgical wounds drained.

These anecdotes merely skim the surface of Bruno reality. They leave out the fact that our six-year-old lived in constant fear during his first three years, sure that Bruno would eat him, for Bruno regularly wolfed down anything he could seize from the poor child's high-chair tray. And nothing can capture the experience of awakening to Bruno's loud whining at four in the morning, assuming he really had to go, and then discovering he just wanted to watch for the rabbit on the other side of the fence. On one such occasion, Alan punched him in the mouth, learning through extreme knuckle pain that one *never* punches a dog in the mouth.

In Buffalo, New York, where we live, more than half the children in the public schools live in poverty. Yet we spent enormous sums to maintain and accommodate Bruno. At any time we could have asked the vet to "put him to sleep," as the euphemism goes, and as the vet quite frankly suggested. But we felt we had made a commitment to Bruno. He was a fellow being whom we had taken into our home, and we experienced him as such, not just as a toy to be discarded should it cease to be amusing.

The bottom line is contradiction. Our experience of Bruno was utterly at odds with deliberate, rational analysis of our situation. In this respect, we soon discovered, we were not alone. In American culture at large, treatment of pets is riddled with contradiction. We spend $8 billion per year keeping dogs and cats, often in absurd luxury (grooming parlors, jewelry, even fur coats for some). Pet food takes up more supermarket shelf space than any other commodity, even though the

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proliferation of advertised flavors and textures does nothing to benefit animal health. What we don't wish to know, however, is how many animals suffer and die as a direct result of our pet-keeping practices. Of the 72,000 dogs and cats born daily in the United States, only one in five find a home. Shelters destroy some eighteen million unwanted animals each year, while other unwanted pets live short miserable lives scrounging for food: major cities like New York and Los Angeles have about 100,000 wild dogs each.

We abhor the eating of dogs or cats as akin to cannibalism. Shelters therefore refuse to export cat and dog bodies for use as human food, fearing public outcry, yet these same discarded bodies are regularly sent to rendering plants to be recycled into low-phosphate detergent and hog and chicken food, a practice that seems to pass as minimally acceptable.

Our culture tolerates those who lavish affection and resources on pets, but when totemistic affection is expressed through bestiality, we find the behavior despicable. Pet keeping has been called a form of petty domination, with its origins in decadent aristocratic traditions—perhaps a way of mediating our contradictory attitudes toward incest taboos, given the limited license pets provide to fondle warm, furry bodies within a familial setting. Nevertheless, these put-downs do not capture the almost magical contact that occurs when, for example, dogs are used to help emotionally disturbed children regain their connection to the world. What is the meaning of that dog–person bond? It is not universal, for the treatment of pets is as various as the cultures of the world. In some areas, dogs have traditionally been regarded as scavengers and "pestiferous vermin." This is still the case in Northern Thailand, where dogs keep the compounds clean in the absence of bathrooms. There, to eat dog is considered revolting because dogs are low creatures who eat feces. On the other hand, the West has no monopoly on affection for dogs. Early explorers in Australia found that Aborigine women nursed dingo pups along with their own infants, and the pups were lovingly raised in the household.

Our own culture's paradoxical and contradictory relationship with pets is but a subset of our relationship with animals generally. We simultaneously know and do not wish to know the truth. Animal suffering makes us anxious and uncomfortable, yet most of us want to make "rational" use of animals for our own well-being. Think about calves confined in crates in darkness, so starved for iron that they drink their own urine, so starved for maternal affection that they suck desperately at any object offered them; or caged laboratory rabbits whose eyes are doused with burning, blinding chemicals.

Eager to experience haute cuisine without cholesterol, many of us happily devour veal dishes despite the bleak, anguished experience of the calves whose flesh, we know, supplies the meat. And we regularly anoint ourselves with perfumes, powders, sprays, and ointments to enhance our capacity to attract other human animals, employing for the purpose cosmetics tested by tormenting hapless creatures.

*Our children's books are filled with furry animals, whom our kids relate to as fellow beings, at least until they sit down to dine on some of them.*

Although we often choose to ignore animal reality, few topics grip public attention with the force of an animal story. The single biggest media event during the 1988 presidential campaign was the dramatically depicted plight of some stranded whales off the Alaskan coast. The most sophisticated manipulators of our consumer consciousness, those who design ads for beer, know that nothing sells their product so well as dogs (or perhaps the combination of dogs and sex, which is even more curious). And our children's books are filled with furry, warm, loving animals, whom our kids relate to as fellow beings, at least until they sit down to dine on some of them.

Animal rights activists, usually dismissed by intellectuals as bourgeois sentimentalists, have recently gained surprising political clout. *Newsweek* reported in May 1988 that Congress had received more mail on the subject of animal research than on any other topic, and some university experiments have been halted as a result of public pressure. In December George Bush, embarrassed by negative coverage of his annual winter quail-hunting pageant, felt obliged to assure the people, when he later went deep-sea fishing, that he did not hurt the fish; he planned to throw them back into the ocean after catching them.

As environmental disasters (like the Alaskan oil spill, with its attendant animal suffering) multiply, even mainstream voices are recognizing that we cannot simply go on taking the natural world for granted. Today, however, we are not even close to developing an ethically coherent position on the treatment of the environment in general or of animals in particular. Ostensibly straightforward issues prove confounding. For example, the Endangered Species Act, reflecting a kind of Noah's Ark mentality, is clearly premised on the view that some economic sacrifice may be required to preserve the last members of species threatened with extinction. But the act fails

to address the fact that extinction usually results from habitat alteration. Preserving habitats is expensive, as has been the case with the vast and uncontaminated territories required by California condors or the "old-growth" forests needed by snowy owls. Suddenly our commitment to preservation becomes a commitment to "rescue" a few last survivors and place them in zoos where, we hope, they will breed. But is a condor outside its habitat really a condor, or simply an artifact preserved by people to assuage human guilt? Moreover, on exactly what basis do we give such special emphasis to the category "species," which is, after all, a human creation, manipulable in its plasticity, as interpreters of the Endangered Species Act have discovered? On what basis does a snail darter have a greater claim to our concern than a raccoon suffering in a trap or a rabbit bred to suffer in a lab?

Even when we make a commitment to preserving a natural habitat, what do we mean by "natural" in a world so changed and dominated by humans? Are fires in Yellowstone "natural"? Wild horses on the western prairies? The hunting of overpopulated deer herds?

We simply lack a vocabulary for analyzing these issues, which are ultimately ethical and theological, not just factual. In the context of human suffering caused by AIDS, the absolutism of those who oppose all animal experimentation seems callous in its indifference; yet the tremendous amount of animal suffering that we impose for trivial purposes (the testing of each new color of cosmetics, for example) may be a sign of spiritual debasement. Opponents of animal rights activists charge them with caring only about animals and having no compassion for people. These opponents remind us that Himmler was a proponent of animal rights, that Hitler was a vegetarian.

Perhaps some modern vegetarians, in their purist zeal, seek to construct a fantasy world for themselves, denying that life is rooted in suffering and death, that we are all, in the end, mere flesh. On the other hand, do we really "need" perfectly tender white veal meat, given the dismal suffering that is the price of its production? Does our insatiable desire for McDonald's hamburgers justify turning tropical rain forests into cattle-grazing pastures? At some point, does not our zeal to make productive use of nature threaten not only the future of the world's ecology, but also our own moral well-being?

If we are to take seriously the suffering and survival of animals, we must at some point confront and reject some basic presumptions of what we have inherited as secular Western Culture. These presumptions are rooted in the social moves we deploy to rationalize hierarchy and domination. These basic moves are to universalize one's particularity, to project its absence onto everyone else, and then to privilege the now universalized trait as the basis for hierarchical superiority for oneself and reductionist objectification of the Other. Through this process, dominant groups invent names for characteristics of themselves so as to celebrate their own possession of them and decry their absence in others. So named, these traits become images that take on lives of their own: the traits are implicitly universalized, and others are measured by their distance from norms now taken to be objective or natural. Thus has Western Culture identified itself as the triumph of civilization and instrumental rationality.

The English rationalized their brutal oppression of the Irish on the grounds that the latter were "heathen" and "savage," by which the English meant that the Irish were not *English*, which, by definition, meant "Christian" and "civil." Similarly, Africans were categorized as *not white*, and therefore lacking the package of cultural traits associated with whiteness. And men, having defined themselves as the embodiment of rational discourse and moral capacity, have found women by definition lacking in these traits, which means they must play dependent roles. An extreme example of absence-projection is the Freudian notion of penis envy, which, one might suggest, grew out of Freud's inability, in a cultural context of male domination, to imagine himself as a person without one.

In short, over a period of more than three hundred years a particular form of discourse, largely belonging to privileged white men, has claimed for itself the status of Universal Reason. That discourse, which may be characterized as dualistic, analytic, instrumental rationality, has become the yardstick of human hierarchy and privilege in our culture. It also has become the basis for reconceptualizing our relationship to animals and nature so as to rationalize our exploitation and domination of them.

The Western move with respect to nature has been to universalize our particular conception of rationality and then to project its absence onto the rest of creation. We define ourselves as instrumental rationalists, and on that basis we consider ourselves both different from and hierarchically superior to the rest of nature, entitled to use natural resources for our own instrumental ends.

The most rigorous justification for arrogant instrumentalism is rooted in the Western tradition of science, particularly the Baconian view of nature as an unruly force to be dominated and controlled. Often using imagery depicting man as the aggressive scientific inquirer and nature as a woman to be subdued and exploited, Bacon asserted that one could acquire true knowledge about some aspect of nature only by transforming it into an isolated, manipulable object of human scrutiny, something to be prodded and dissected in a strictly

controlled laboratory setting. This approach stands in stark contrast to that aspect of traditional, Aristotelian science that calls for observation immersed in natural context as the way to comprehend, in its totality, the essential nature of that which is observed.

The philosophical premises upon which Baconian science rests were enunciated by Descartes, with his strict dualisms of mind/matter and subject (observer)/object (observed). Within this dualistic structure, animals are relegated to the status of mere matter. They are thereby despiritualized, left without cultures or minds of their own, without thought, intention, or feeling. Like the rest of the natural world, they are readily available for instrumental human study and exploitation. In effect, the Christian presumption that only rational creatures have souls has reappeared in the form of secular rationality. As novelist Milan Kundera sums it up:

> Man is master and proprietor, says Descartes, whereas the beast is merely an automaton, an animate machine, a *machina animata*. When an animal laments, it is not a lament; it is merely the rasp of a poorly functioning mechanism.

More than three hundred years after the deaths of Descartes and Bacon, this legacy pervades the modern psychology lab, where animals, wrenched from anything resembling their natural habitats, are shocked, poked, cajoled, and otherwise "stimulated" by a variety of mechanisms, often diabolical; and students are taught never to confuse the observer and the observed by anthropomorphizing or projecting onto animals thoughts, feelings, or a social life of their own. The crucial premise is still that animals are to be regarded as mechanisms whose behavior, however complex, can be reduced to an aggregate of stimulus-response reactions governed by genetic codes.

The model epitomized by the psychology lab has sought to prove its rigor by aping the physical sciences. Ironically, however, the most rigorous physicists have been conceding the fallibility of two of their most treasured traditional presuppositions. One is the dichotomy of theory and fact, which maintains that any given explanatory hypothesis can always be objectively tested—can either be tentatively confirmed or soundly falsified by contrary evidence. As most sophisticated scientists have conceded, however, data gathering and observation are always informed and constrained by prevailing theoretical paradigms. The strict dichotomy breaks down.

So too with the dualism of subject and object. Starting with quantum mechanics and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, and continuing with philosophical counterparts such as Wittgenstein's *On Certainty,* we have come to recognize that reality makes itself known and "objective" only through the lens of the particularly situated observer. We see, as it were, always "through a glass, darkly." Instead of detachment, there can be only context.


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A revisit to animal labs shows how they in fact provide a vivid example of the collapse of the observer/observed dualism. As poet, philosopher, and dog trainer Vicki Hearne points out, the presuppositions a researcher brings to the lab inevitably affect not simply the interpretation of what takes place, but also what actually happens. If a dog, who usually starts by trying to be sociable, meets with no response from the behaviorist researcher—who has been taught that animals are incapable of belief, intent, or meaning—then the dog's own capacities will be deadened and it will act as robotic as the researcher believes it to be. Since 1895, white rats have been bred specifically for laboratory use. More docile than their wild counterparts, displaying far less social behavior, and given no opportunity to develop skills necessary for life in the wild, the lab rats are, in effect, objects created expressly to meet the needs of "scientific" observers—a peculiarly artificial starting point for understanding animal behavior. Cats, by way of contrast, are difficult to "observe" because they will sometimes refuse to perform tasks they have already learned, preferring even starvation to the degradation of compliance with human demands. This extraordinary

fact has never been analyzed by behaviorists, who have no available explanatory vocabulary. Determined to Do Science rather than really understand animals, one venerable professor told a young researcher, "Don't use cats, they'll screw up your data."

Now that this rigid dichotomy separating humans from nature has started to break down, both scientists and philosophers have discovered that animals begin to *look* different: we perceive creatures unlike those we previously regarded as objectified otherness. By paying close attention, we "discover" a new animal reality. Dramatic breakthroughs have occurred in two areas: interspecies communication and the study of animal social life as "culture."

No trait has been so relentlessly universalized to privilege us in the animal kingdom as our capacity to communicate through language. Even if we don't challenge that criterion of superiority, we must recognize that experiments in interspecies communication have shown us that animals are capable of mastering language—despite refutations by behaviorists reminiscent of the Church's response to Galileo. When chimps and gorillas learned to use sign language, there was a rush to deny that this behavior went beyond mere "conditioned association." It is now clear, however, that apes can use symbols to represent things not present, and can generalize concepts (like the chimp Washoe, who learned to sign "open" for a door, and quickly made the same request for drawers, jars, and even faucets).

Facing the loss of their monopoly on "language," recalcitrant humans retreated behind the bastion of "syntax" to describe specifically human, and therefore privileged, linguistic capacity. While the debate goes on (apes may be hesitant in their syntactical ability; dolphins may be quite adept), it is clear that the former bright line between language and "nonlanguage" now eludes us: when Koko the Gorilla picks up a rubber tube and uses it as a straw for drinking while joking in signs about being an "elephant gorilla," or when Michael, now a captive gorilla, sadly describes how "bad men" came and hit his mother on the head so that blood appeared, then the syntax debate begins to look like nothing more than defensive academic quibbling.

While displays of formal linguistic skill have compelled us to reconsider assumptions about animal capacity, there is a sense in which these grammar/syntax/concept debates are simply beside the point. People have, for thousands of years, entered into complex relationships with animals, despite the absence of symbols and alphabets. The stories successful trainers tell of their horses and dogs have a moral dimension totally missing in behaviorist accounts. Implicit and explicit in the trainers' language is the notion that their animals have not only intelligence, but a complex and delicate capacity for moral understanding. When trainers start with the assumption that animals can have a responsible relationship with humans, and when they insist through discipline that the animals act accordingly, they can elicit an extraordinary degree of responsiveness, and what can rightly be called integrity. (Behaviorists, in contrast, make lousy trainers.) This reciprocal trust and shared sense of moral responsibility may constitute the real meaning of "language" between humans and animals.

While our growing awareness of animal communicative skill serves to dislodge us from hierarchical complacency, we persist in measuring animals by their distance from our still-universalized criteria of competence and moral superiority. Much more destabilizing are studies that are starting to show the rich depth of animal life in the wild. There are, it turns out, animal societies all around us about which we know almost nothing. Animals can be conscious and communicative in their own way, not ours; they can have cultures of their own, rather than just learning to participate in our culture.

In one of the great flip-arounds in the history of science, it is now argued that animals with the smallest brains are the ones who most require the capacity for conscious thought, since they are least able to contain the complex genetic material necessary to sustain a largely automatic response system. Thus the complex lives of insects have taken on new significance. One of the most successful animals in the world, for example, is the leaf-cutter ant, who performs a wide variety of tasks, including the tending of fungus gardens, while another type of ant is known to "farm" other insect species, feeding, protecting, and even building shelters for its domesticated livestock. So too, the honeybee's "waggle dance" has been called the "second most complex language we know," involving a highly stylized map of landmarks, direction, solar position, and information about the relative desirability of located substances.

Meanwhile, researchers studying mammals with highly developed social structures are starting to write in a manner more reminiscent of sensitive cultural anthropology, again destabilizing our privileged position as bearers of "culture." Their studies have brought about such a blurring of disciplinary borderlines that books about baboons, chimps, and gorillas are often shelved in the anthropology section of bookstores. The pioneer researchers, of course, were Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey; yet in some sense their chimps and gorillas were the easier cases, animals known to be evolutionarily similar to us, to be mysteriously "us" and "not us" at the same time, so that the complexity of their social

*(Continued on p. 92)*

# Death of Popeye

*Shana Penn*

He doesn't go away. His movements make me dizzy. The circular rhythms grow hypnotic and weaken the grip of my muscles. They shake me loose, unanchor me. My will to be concealed unravels.

I am three-and-a-half years old. Trapped beneath hungry gyrations. Suddenly I am wise beyond my years, beyond my choice to kick. I am frightened. Should I forget?

I know this boy. A neighborhood teenager. Oily complexion. He never played with the other kids on the block. I hear my mother remind me, "Be nice to the baby-sitter."

Wet, mute lips lick my nape. Fog sweeps down my neck. His weight crushes my spine. I am pushed into the crisp, white sheets, forced through the springs and cotton fluff of the mattress, squashed between bed and floor. Nerve endings retreat from the interior walls of my skin to dodge his touch. I slither and slide across muscle, tissue, pumping blood. Where am I going? A crack or hole, I must escape.

Earlier that night he followed me around the house and watched me play my favorite game: Popeye Shipwrecked on a Desert Island. In the living room I find shelter from a storm under the glass coffee table. I crawl on hands and knees between green paisley chairs and floor lamps, and scour the island for spinach. Spinach will give me strength to rebuild my boat. Climbing a hillside covered with poppies and dandelions, up the steps from the foyer to the second floor, I spot leafy greens. Noisily I munch my fill, then stand erect, facing west, to await transformation from sailorman to Superman. My body begins to swell, veins pop out, thighs throb. Muscles of a weight lifter ripple through my blouse and shorts. I explode into superhuman dimensions and torpedo through the house, unleashing a whirlwind that magically repairs my boat. Seconds later, I set sail from the top of the staircase. The ocean waves are choppy. I bump down the steps on my behind. Home to Olive Oyl.

The entire evening I play and he watches. Occasionally I feel his eyes on my body. "Want to play?" I ask. He shakes his head no. My brother Andy would have raced me up the stairs to gobble down the spinach. He would have held me and reassured me, told me not to be afraid during the storm. This boy just watches. He hardly speaks at all. Eventually I exhaust myself, and he tells me it is time for bed. Later that night he wakes me to his own game.

He doesn't have a sister. He doesn't know how to play. I hide under a pillow and crawl into a clenched fist. A coward, feigning sleep. In the silence of his motions, I wait for him to leave my body, my bedroom, my space. Not once do I speak. Nor do I open my eyes. I am abandoned to a task I never asked for.

I wake up burdened. Bruised with memory, the weight of his body, the silence of my room. It is Sunday morning. Everyone is home. I hear my brothers rolling around on the living room floor. Down the hallway, the television



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is playing in my parents' bedroom.

I could be watching Popeye.

Rising from my bed, I inch down the hallway to my parents' bedroom. Reaching through shadows, I gather my will into knuckles that tap at their door.

My parents are reading the Sunday paper. I shuffle about awkwardly. The gray-blue carpet swallows my knees. I am treading in gray-blue carpet. My voice is a scant flutter of light across shadows.

"Mommy, Daddy, I don't like the baby-sitter. He hurt me."

My father raises his eyebrows and for one brief moment looks at me. He clears his throat and continues to read the paper. My mother glances at him, then leans toward me. Her newspaper section collapses between us.

"What did he do to you?" she asks.

"He hugged me," I mumble from the foot of the bed.

Her eyes tug at me. My throat caves in. Why doesn't she hold me? Why doesn't he say something?

My father swallows his breath and flips through the pages. His legs press into the bedding. My mother looks at my father.

"Don't worry," she says. "We won't let him baby-sit again." I hear her tell me to run downstairs and play with my brothers.

I retreat to the doorway. My mother and father return to reading. Emptied ice cream bowls are stacked on the night table. Bathrobes are draped over a gray stuffed chair. My father yawns. My mother sighs. The bedroom starts to fade. Tears blur my vision, remain planted in my eyes. I am scared to hold myself.

I descend the hallway stairs one by one past last night's hill of spinach. I return, a castaway, to my desert island. My brothers are wrestling in the living room. Their heads bob up from the floor behind the sofa.

*In the silence of his motions, I wait for him to leave my body, my bedroom, my space. I am abandoned to a task I never asked for.*

Grinning monkeys. They taunt me to join them. I smile weakly. If I play with them, I'll wind up with a busted lip or bruised behind. Not today. I am Olive Oyl, stuck in an empty can of spinach. No one knows that I am lost.

I climb upstairs to my bedroom, stand tiptoe on the desk chair, and raise choice onto the highest shelf. Squeezed among the books, trolls, and trinkets. One day I'll huff and puff and blow the lid off this can of spinach. Choice will leap off the shelf and sink into my arms. □

## Gaza

*Rachel Tzvia Back*

I

After the final heave, house collapsing
in and all the prayers that had held
the ceiling up for years rushing
through dust with a low moan
but leaving, you have seen her
sifting through the rubble,
sandaled foot striking an iron
bedframe, splintered picture
of a prophet's resting place.
With no tears you have seen her,
dry like stone, like tile, and alone.

Then understand the Law as I did not:
we tore the house down and she may not rebuild
there or elsewhere. *Her kitchen smelled of zatar
and of bread.* She will have no home here, no home.

II

Consider the prayers' desertion and our faith
crushed where it had been tucked neatly
between headscarves in the top drawer
even as our walls still stand:
*there is no believing now.*
*There are only children in the alleys,*
*their blood darkening the dirt.*

After the rains, this mound will settle,
sink into itself and forget what it was.
But she, who salvaged
herself, will not forget.
This you cannot see, but listen:
how the storm rises, and the hills
move closer to the river.

*The intrigue, the military activity, and the intervention in Lebanon in the wake of Israel's capture of Sheik Obeid may temporarily distract attention from the fate of the Palestinian people, the central drama of the Middle East. But attention will inevitably return to that arena: one and a half million people living under occupation and struggling for their freedom and national self-determination.*

*We deplore the endless spiral of violence. We cannot accept as legitimate the senseless murder of Israeli civilians riding in a bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Whatever the motivation, this was a callous and destructive act. Nor can we accept the murder of other Israelis. There is no "moral equivalence" here: the actions by Palestinians, whatever their motives, are just plain wrong, barbarous, unacceptable.*

*Neither can we accept the pain, beatings, shootings, and killings inflicted by Israelis on Palestinians. These activities go far beyond self-defense. Right-wing settlers have begun to attack West Bank Palestinians, further destabilizing the situation. Angry crowds respond to individual acts of terrorism by attacking random Palestinians, creating an atmosphere that brings to mind the pogroms of Eastern Europe. Many Israelis worry that the West Bank settlers may soon escalate their level of violence and precipitate a civil war as a way to prevent any negotiations and subsequent settlement.*

*In this section we present an update on some aspects of the current political situation in Israel and the West Bank as well as some reflections on a strategy for how to create the psychological preconditions for the possibility of peace.*

# Psychological Dimensions of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

*Michael Lerner*

All the "objective conditions" seem ripe for peace in the Middle East. The superpowers have no interest in perpetuating the conflict and are willing to lean on their respective client states to make concessions; Iran's fanaticism appears to be less of a regional factor after the defeat of its war efforts against Iraq and the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini; the PLO, abandoning its previous rejectionist platform, has accepted the Shamir election proposal in the version originally developed by Rabin and Labor party hard-liners; most Israelis realize that they must eventually deal with the PLO; and even hard-line American Jewish organizations have decided that they won't be able to block the American–PLO dialogue.

Is peace around the corner? Not a chance.

The problem is that the focus on "objective conditions" overlooks the complexities of feeling and perception that have made this one of the most intractable international conflicts of the past forty years. The actors continually choose paths that are self-destructive and counterproductive to their alleged rational aims. Israelis claim to seek a partner for negotiations, yet they simply ignore every overture made by the PLO to open talks; and, while claiming to seek a moderate Palestinian voice on the West Bank, they have done everything possible to discourage the development of independent Palestinian leadership. The Palestinians, in turn, recognize that their immediate political task is to convince Israelis that they are willing to live in peace alongside Israel—but they have been unable to figure out that launching military attacks over the Lebanese border, or seeming to justify attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians within the pre-1967 borders, only enrages Israelis and strengthens the position of the Israeli right wing.

These are not simple mistakes that can be straightened out by rational argument; if face-to-face negotiations ever do begin between Israelis and Palestinians, these negotiations will not be governed primarily by the dynamics of enlightened self-interest. Yet the irrationalities that govern the situation are not mysterious or impossible to deal with. They are, rather, psychodynamically rooted in the histories and experiences of these two very different peoples.

Several years ago I spent half a year at Tel Aviv University doing research on the psychological dynamics that shape the self-perception of Israelis and Palestinians.

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My work began with a focus on stress at work. In the course of interviewing hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians, I found that the interviewees inevitably drew me into the larger national conflict and the ways in which they interpreted their possibilities. On each subsequent visit to Israel, including one completed in the summer of 1989, I held follow-up interviews and discussed my conclusions with the interviewees and with psychotherapists, journalists, labor leaders, leaders of the Israeli Sephardic community, political activists from all parts of the Israeli political spectrum, and Palestinian activists and intellectuals.

My central finding was this: although emerging from very different historical experiences, Israelis and Palestinians suffer from a set of historically generated psychological scars that prevent them from acting in accordance with their own rational self-interest. In some respects this is a classic case of surplus powerlessness. Both sides have experienced *real* powerlessness, but they have developed psychological frames of self-understanding that make them more powerless than the current reality requires. As a result, neither side is able to take the risks necessary to reassure the other side that peace is in fact obtainable. Instead, each side carefully nourishes the memory of its wounds and uses each current development to further confirm for itself the impossibility of transcending the current dynamic.

When we discuss surplus powerlessness as a factor in the collective experience of an entire people, we are directed toward understanding the historical experiences—mediated through family and cultural history—that contribute to the shaping of that people's current perceptions of its possibilities. Those dynamics are typically rooted in a historic experience of trauma generated by the frustration of our fundamental human desire for recognition and confirmation. To the extent that some set of traumatic events convinces a people that its frustrated need for recognition and confirmation will inevitably lead to a repetition of the original traumatic denial, that people will begin to feel frightened whenever the possibility of achieving such recognition arises. Many people would choose to die rather than to reexperience the humiliation and degradation associated with the memory of the original traumatic denial of their needs. So people and peoples develop a multiplicity of strategies to avoid ever reexperiencing that initial trauma. Nationalism, for example, may protect us from having to experience the vulnerability we would be subjected to if we were open to the possibility that we might find deep connectedness and confirmation in the "other." Conversely, we can organize a community around our anger at all the "others" who we are sure would act in a hurtful way toward us should we ever open ourselves to them and risk trusting connections.

Those who have been oppressed and traumatized typically find themselves subject to a "repetition compulsion"—the process by which we pass on to others (neighbors, co-workers, the next generation) the very traumatic experiences that were acted out on us. To the extent that the repetition compulsion dominates our unconscious lives, present events will be cast in ways that make it seem appropriate for us to do unto others what was once done to us. These dynamics of surplus powerlessness, played out in part through a repetition compulsion, are shared by all the major parties to the current struggle in the Middle East.

In order to be viable, any strategies for peace in the Middle East must explicitly address the deep psychic wounds that have so crippled all the parties involved. To do that, we need to understand in greater detail how the dynamics of surplus powerlessness are specifically rooted in the historical experiences of the major actors in the conflict: the dominant Ashkenazi political elite of Israel, the Sephardic majority of Israel, and the Palestinian national movement.

## The Ashkenazim

It is foolish and naive to attempt to understand the Israeli response to the Palestinians without understanding the massive impact of two thousand years of oppression on the Israeli Ashkenazim (those whose families came from Europe and who today dominate the major economic, military, and political institutions of Israel).

American liberals make all sorts of excuses for the intense level of violence that is a daily reality in the American ghettos—violence that is, for the most part, directed by Blacks against other Blacks. The liberals refer to the cumulative impact of slavery and of the subsequent oppression and racism on the collective psyches of the Black community. Yet we are often less aware of the inevitably distorting impact of violence on the Jewish people. Jews did not respond with violence to the violence done to them—they couldn't. Jews had to moderate their response for fear that if they spoke their anger in any clear terms they would simply call down upon themselves greater oppression and slaughter. As a result, Jews often learned to internalize the violence, directing it against themselves in the form of an extremely punishing superego (manifested most dramatically in their attempt to explain their own exile as a punishment for their sins rather than as the result of their failure to win a righteous but futile national liberation struggle against the world's largest imperialist power), in the form of intense internal intellectual rivalries and struggles, and in the form of self-mockery and Jewish humor.

Underlying all of these responses was the incredible

pathos and pain of a people that had been rejected by its neighbors. The Jewish people earned the enmity of ruling classes in the ancient and medieval world by building their national identity and religious practice around the weekly retelling of the revolutionary story of the Exodus. Throughout history ruling classes have always explained to their subjects that class domination is necessary, built into the structure of society. The message of the Jewish people, its very existence as a people, seemed to indicate the opposite, that the world can be fundamentally altered. No wonder, then, that ruling elites found the Jews troublesome—and felt it necessary to try to set their own people against the Jews. The fiercely independent spirit of the Jews, their inability, for instance, to accommodate themselves to Roman imperialism, frequently led them to rebel, even against militarily superior powers, and eventually left them as homeless wanderers among the nations of a world whose peoples had been warned not to trust them.

The pain and humiliation of being a nation without a homeland, and of being rejected and treated with derision by many who surrounded them, was more than the Jews could bear. Traumatized by the way the world thwarted their quite normal needs for recognition and communion with others, Jews developed a theological system for dealing with their pain. On the one hand, the Exile was the punishment for their own sins of having abandoned God's ways. On the other hand, they reinterpreted the older notions of their special responsibilities to fulfill God's commandments by now seeing themselves as specially chosen to bring God's word to the world—a compensatory move that both provided an explanation for the moral inferiority of those who oppressed them and simultaneously helped regenerate that oppression by further infuriating the peoples whose ruling classes had already predisposed them to distrust the Jews. Thus psychologically armed against the onslaught of hostility from surrounding Christian and Islamic cultures, no longer willing to reexperience the hope and yearning for connection with others that had so often been frustrated, the Jewish people survived the growing hostilities of the past two thousand years.

The continual instability of daily life, the expulsions from countries where Jews had lived for hundreds of years, the propensity of anti-Jewish racism to reappear even in societies that no longer espoused the Christianity within which that anti-Semitism had originally been fostered, led most Jews to believe that racism against Jews was part of the psychic structure of almost all non-Jewish societies. When the liberatory promise of the French Revolution and the revolutionary upsurges of the nineteenth century failed to eliminate the deeply entrenched anti-Semitism of European societies, Jews responded in four different ways:

1. *Religious Jews* tended to be passive and to believe that the suffering of the Jewish people could not be overcome until the Messiah was sent by God. This approach led to the "marching like lambs to the slaughter" phenomenon of some sectors of European Jewry.

2. *Assimilationists* thought that anti-Semitism could be overcome by losing one's identity in larger Christian societies (a strategy that failed in Europe when the Nazis simply went back through birth records and sent to the death camps even those whose families had converted two or three generations earlier) or by courting ruling groups in the hope that they would come to our aid when necessary (a strategy that failed dismally when the American ruling class refused either to bomb the railroads to the concentration camps or to open the immigration gates and allow Jews to escape from Europe).

*The cries of the Jewish victim can be heard not too far below the surface of arrogant self-assertion.*

3. *Internationalists* thought that one could reject one's Jewish identity and count on international working-class solidarity to overcome anti-Semitism. Most of these internationalists perished—not only at the hands of the Nazis, but also at the hands of the European proletariat whose anti-Semitism led many to refuse to help the Jews, and others to join in the massacre.

4. *Zionists* believed that the only solution was for the Jews to recognize that in a historical period in which most peoples were responding to nationalism, the Jews would need to have their own Jewish state for self-defense.

None of these responses was based on the assumption that it might actually be possible for the Jewish people to live in peace inside Europe with their non-Jewish neighbors and to find in that relationship the recognition and mutual confirmation that they had for centuries been denied. Subsequent experience in a Europe that responded so enthusiastically to anti-Semitism showed that Jewish fears on this score were well founded. It is the Zionist response to which I shall address myself here, since it proved the most congruent with the historical realities of the twentieth century and since it shaped the State of Israel. Moreover, it was the Zionist response that seemed to embody the greatest degree of healthy self-affirmation in its attempt to recover psychological health for the Jews by insisting on the Jewish people's right to be recognized as a nation amongst all other nations.

Yet, as though to protect themselves from whatever remained attractive in the Jewish past and to justify the personal sacrifices of going to Palestine when they might have sought their personal fortunes by emigrating to the U.S., Zionists adopted an ethos that negated anything that reminded them of the self-limiting dynamics of Jewish accommodation to the Diaspora. Instead of acknowledging the painful life experiences of the Jewish people that had led to many self-limiting choices (not to mention the positive value—derived from our Diaspora experience—of Jews' learning to compromise and live with others), the Zionists saw the entirety of the Diaspora experience as generating a Jewish pathology that could be cured only by living as a strong and independent people in our own land, a people that could no longer be kicked around and that would no longer have to spend its psychic energy "pleasing the goyim."

Underlying all the bravado was the same melancholic resignation at the impossibility of achieving real reciprocity with others, which had pushed an earlier generation of Jews to escape into the world of Talmud and fantasies of the coming of the Messiah. Zionist activists shared with the more passive religious fundamentalists the conviction that genuine human reciprocity with non-Jews would always be impossible, but simply adopted a different strategy to effectively deny themselves any memory of the desire for connection or of the pain associated with its denial.

The most problematic consequence of the Zionist response was its call for an Israel that would be a nation like all other nations. The idea of a special moral responsibility of the Jewish people, embedded in the concept of the "chosen people," was bitterly rejected by Zionists. Instead, many Zionists argued, Israel should be judged by the same standards as all other peoples. If the rule of the jungle governed the twentieth century, as seemed obvious to many of these Zionists, then Jews had to get sharp teeth and claws like the other beasts that had been devouring them. If the world was governed by militarism, the logic went on, then Jews had to become militarists. When others responded that in so doing the Zionists would be rejecting the long history and culture of the Jewish people that did self-consciously judge itself by different criteria from those prevailing in other societies, the Zionists responded that this argument reflected a ghetto mentality—that the attempt to apply moral standards was a ridiculous religious fantasy that had nothing to do with the reality of the twentieth century.

In short, playing out the repetition compulsion described above, and having been shaped by a brutal history, a section of the brutalized people adopts the behavior of the oppressors and identifies with those oppressors' moral standards. Barely had this worldview begun to express itself in the Zionist movement of the twentieth century than the fury of European anti-Semitism reasserted itself, seeming to confirm that Jews could never trust anyone.

The trauma of the Holocaust re-evoked the feelings of shame and disgust that many Zionists felt about their own history. Faced with this new trauma, many Jews found it too painful to continue nurturing the hope that they could obtain the recognition and validation we all seek from each other. Rather than lament the tragedy of a world that makes such connectedness impossible, some Ashkenazim had already begun to foster in Israel a culture that rejected the very need for connection with others as a Diaspora pathology. And those who had trusted non-Jews, and hence not prepared themselves for what afterward appeared to many Zionists to be a betrayal, were berated for being naive and scorned for allegedly having walked as sheep to the slaughter.

The Holocaust finally and massively traumatized the Jewish people. Any talk of rational solutions today must be tempered by an understanding that we are dealing with a traumatized people, a people that is only *now* beginning to acknowledge to itself what it has gone through.

The greatest distortions of the present situation are in part a product of this trauma. The Palestinians have only made matters worse: by talking about pushing the Jews into the sea, by even now having a charter that calls for the elimination of the Jewish state (despite Arafat's personal disclaimers), and by failing to repudiate those people in the Palestinian movement and the Arab world who overtly identify with anti-Jewish racism.

Palestinian bluster and racism would, however, be considerably less important if Israelis could approach the situation with a realistic assessment of their own power. The inability of many Israelis to tell the difference between Nazis and Palestinians, and their inability to recognize their own military superiority so that they could understand that they are no longer a powerless people trembling at the threshold of the extermination camps of Europe, is not willed stupidity. It is, rather, a pathological distortion based on the trauma of victimization not yet overcome.

Yet the cries of the Jewish victim can be heard not too far below the surface of arrogant self-assertion. The deep doubts that the PLO has "really" recognized the State of Israel with its latest moves are not simply about a piece of paper or the content of a particular declaration by the Palestine National Council; rather, they mask a cry of pain at a history in which the peoples of the world have never given us the recognition and mutual confirmation to which human beings are entitled. No wonder, then, that Israelis are often unable to hear a similar cry of pain coming from the Palestinian people—our own cries are so loud they drown out those of the

other. This pain impedes realistic political judgment and ensures that Israel will misjudge its possibilities.

## The Sephardim

The Sephardim (Jews whose families emigrated from Islamic lands) are the majority group in Israel, and their votes for the right wing have provided Likud with its margin of victory in recent elections. The Sephardim shared with the Jews who settled in Europe a common experience of oppression, victimization, and traumatization through the expulsion from their land in the ancient world. For more than a thousand years Sephardim were degraded second-class citizens. They were subject to periodic outbursts of mass murder, and faced daily economic, political, and social discrimination in Islamic countries. The Koran contains many denunciations of Jews and Judaism which set the tone for the relationship that developed. The *dhimmi,* or non-Muslim, was tolerated under strictly regulated conditions. A special *dhimmi* tax was often levied in a systematic attempt to expropriate Jewish property, so that Jews often lived in poverty or near-poverty. Though there were periods in which some Islamic rulers were particularly friendly toward the Jews, and in which individual Jews managed to play important roles as court physicians, moneylenders, and political advisers, Jewish life in Islamic states often entailed a careful balancing act whose precariousness created deep tension in daily life. In many Islamic societies Jews were required to wear distinctive pieces of clothing so they could be easily identified; they were not allowed to own horses, not permitted to drink wine in public, and not permitted to perform their religious rituals in public. The cumulative impact of these measures, coupled with periodic outbursts of more severe violence, was to ensure that they would never feel fully secure. Once again, Jews were unable to achieve a sense of confirmation and mutual recognition from their neighbors. The pain and humiliation of this constant rejection at the hands of the Islamic majority, the powerlessness and need to internalize the resulting rage, left deep scars on the Sephardim. These Sephardic Jews feel about the Arabs the way many refugees from the Soviet Union feel about communism—and they find it hard to understand why others who have had no direct experience with the Arab regimes don't take the Sephardic experience more seriously. In the interviews I conducted in Israel I heard many Sephardim argue that their anger at Arabs was not (as in the case of the Ashkenazim) a displacement of an earlier anger (toward Germans or Poles or East Europeans): "We lived in an Islamic society, and we became refugees from *that kind of society.* So our anger is appropriately directed." It is an anger that derives much of its energy from the denial of recognition that Sephardim experienced for a thousand years at the hands of their Arab neighbors.

There is, however, a second and perhaps even more complicated element in the story of the Sephardim. When many Sephardim came to Israel in the 1950s, their entire history and culture was demeaned by the dominant Ashkenazic culture—Sephardim were made to feel as though they were inferior in every way. Moreover, because they had not been subjected to the Holocaust, their own tales of suffering at the hands of the Arabs were construed by the Ashkenazim as being whiny and self-indulgent. Their culture was denigrated and their self-respect assaulted. This created massive resentment that is today a central factor in the political culture of Sephardic life. After a long history of invalidation by their surrounding Arab neighbors, Sephardim returned to the land of their ancestors with the anticipation that they were, at last, coming home. Instead, they were greeted with derision, which was often painful and embarrassing. The humiliation of this experience led to a deep anger that has been displaced onto the most immediately available recipient—the Palestinian people. It is in relationship to the Palestinians that some Sephardim have been able to act out the frustrations they have suffered.

## The Palestinians

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European nations colluded to carve out a series of national entities in the Middle East in order to divide up the area among the colonizers. The Arab peoples who lived there were seen as primitives whose fate and fortune could be decided elsewhere, whose long cultural and religious tradition could be demeaned, and whose own wishes for recognition and validation could be ignored. Palestinian nationalism, then, emerged first as a variant of a larger Arab nationalism—a reaction to the experience of oppression and invalidation. Like so many other similar anticolonial phenomena, the demand to be recognized as fully human was as much a part of the impulse toward national self-determination as was any intrinsic political, economic, or cultural program.

No wonder, then, that Palestinian national self-determination was from the start marked by strong opposition to those Jews who had begun to return to their ancient land. That early Zionists could describe the land of Palestine as "a land without a people for a people without a land" was an indication to Palestinians who lived there how deeply ingrained was a colonial mentality in the consciousness of these Jewish settlers. The exclusion of Palestinians from Jewish labor unions and communal settlements seemed a further indication that the Zionists had no room in their conceptual scheme

for the Palestinian people. In these ways, painful and humiliating experience as a victim of colonialism was identified in Palestinian consciousness with the emergence of a Zionist presence in Palestine—a presence symbolized most thoroughly by the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine without bothering to consult the desires of those who formed a majority in that land.

I do not mean here to exonerate the Palestinians for their obvious racism, which also played an important role in shaping their response to the Zionists. The racist attitudes toward Jews that were dominant in Islamic societies certainly played a role in preventing Palestinians from being able to see how Jews might be potential allies in undermining British imperialism. The Jews who came as settlers, after all, were not primarily British or enthusiastic subjects of other colonial regimes. Rather, they were for the most part escapees from the oppression of Eastern Europe, and they arrived with internationalist ideas that might have provided a potential basis for alliance and for the cultivation of mutual interests. It was precisely this possibility that frightened many of the feudal leaders of the Palestinian people, and it was through its leaders' eyes that the largely illiterate Palestinian peasantry received its information about the nature and intentions of the Jewish settlers. Playing on the preexisting anti-Jewish attitudes of Islamic culture, the feudal leaders developed a national consciousness that gave the early Palestinian movement a distinctly anti-Semitic reality. Palestinian nationalism gave no recognition to the fact that in the first half of the twentieth century the Jews were landless, homeless, and desperate refugees, while the Palestinians refused to share what land they had. In fact, the Palestinian national movement became increasingly involved with Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitism, and some of its most important leaders openly championed a Nazi victory to deal with the Jewish problem.

But it makes little sense to condemn all Palestinians living at that time; most had little information, and many who did were expressing a legitimate anger at Western imperialism—anger incorrectly but understandably directed against Jewish Zionists. It's more reasonable to understand the situation as one in which two peoples, both victims of international imperialism, were manipulated into opposing each other so as to strengthen the hold of the larger imperialist order. We don't need pathological categories to understand the circumstance that led to the collisions of 1945 to 1948.

Yet, when all is said and done, the collision of these two nationalisms led directly to the creation of the Arab refugee problem. Here I think it critical to acknowledge that many of the subsequent self-destructive activities of the Palestinian people in dealing with their situation were a result of the trauma of dispossession and then of life in the camps. I use "self-destructive" here in the same way that I apply it to the current activities of the Israeli government: self-destructive because the PLO fostered a spirit of armed struggle that was then and remains today utterly and tragically futile—and this they substituted for the kinds of political initiatives that might have worked. I believe today that a Gandhian-style Palestinian movement, with total Gandhian discipline and Gandhian clarity about accepting a nonviolent solution and a demilitarized state—a strategy that firmly renounces any intention of using a Palestinian state as a launching pad for a second stage of struggle, a strategy that unequivocally denounces acts of terrorism against Israelis inside the pre-1967 borders—would produce a Palestinian state within five years; and I believe that every other strategy will take more time, cost more lives, and involve more pain.

Meanwhile, the psychological trauma of past pain caused by the dislocation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948, the devastating impact of forty years of life in the refugee camps, the shame at being mistreated and manipulated and sometimes even murdered by Arab regimes' use of the Palestinians to advance the sectarian needs of Arab power politics, and the daily humiliations that are part of life under Israeli occupation—all combine to traumatize the Palestinians in ways that make them unable to act effectively in their own self-interest.

The ultimate triumph of irrationality might come if the Palestinian people, unable to achieve any serious this-worldly gains through their support of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, were to turn toward Islamic fundamentalism and its otherworldly solutions.

## Healing the Wounds

The primary task for those who wish to bring peace to the Middle East is to develop a set of confidence-building measures that can help reassure each side that there is a basis for trust. If, for example, the Palestinians were willing to take a dramatic set of steps like those taken by Sadat, the political atmosphere would change instantaneously in a massive way.

A Sadat-like move would entail the following: (1) amending the PNC charter to eliminate references to the destruction of Israel and substituting in their places references to living in peace with Israel; (2) the PLO's accepting and articulating in detail how demilitarization of a Palestinian state would work and describing in detail the measures it would take against those Palestinian factions that seek to continue terrorist attacks; (3) the PLO's renouncing all forms of violence and insisting that the Palestinian movement model itself on Gandhian re-

sistance; and (4) the PLO's committing itself now to signing, as part of the same agreement that would create a Palestinian state, a public declaration renouncing—in the name of the Palestinian people—all claims to the parts of Palestine within the pre-1967 boundaries of Israel.

If the Palestinians were to implement such changes in one dramatic step, not piecemeal and not quietly, the peace forces in Israel would be dramatically empowered and would virtually be assured of victory in future electoral struggles in Israel.

*It's fashionable today to be skeptical of all psychological approaches, to see them as reductive or flaky attempts to avoid "real politics."*

Similarly, if an Israeli leader were to accept the right of the Palestinian people to national self-determination and to a fully demilitarized state, he or she would quickly help consolidate and strengthen the forces within the Palestinian camp that would be able to lead the Palestinian movement toward a path of mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence.

Yet before such developments can take place, the relevant players will have to believe that their own willingness to take such risks is likely to produce a change on the other side. Much of my analysis here is designed to show why most of the actors are unlikely to draw such conclusions.

Similarly, the various well-intended plans calling for "education for democracy," "education against racism," and even face-to-face parlor meetings or encounter sessions between Israelis and Palestinians have so far had minimal impact on the larger political realities of the society. No matter how many good ideas are taught, no matter how good one feels after meeting face to face with real human beings on the other side, the abiding psychological legacy ultimately reasserts itself. Even those who have felt absolutely convinced that they could trust people on the other side feel unable to say this in a loud and clear way to their fellow Israelis or Palestinians, aware that they will only discredit themselves among those whom they hope to influence. Given the powerful impact of this psychological legacy, every partial move toward accommodation is interpreted as meaningless by the other side. So, when Arafat says he will come to Jerusalem to talk peace, Shamir says he will arrest Arafat should he arrive at Ben-Gurion—because he is convinced that it is not peace but trickery that ultimately underlies Arafat's moves and that will always necessarily underlie the moves of the other, because the other cannot be trusted.

Effective strategy would, instead, integrate a focus on the pains of the past and provide a way for people to confront and transcend those pains. We can learn here from the remarkable impact of the women's movement and its array of methods for transforming the self-understanding of women in the past twenty-five years. Through group consciousness raising, articles, speeches, rituals, fiction, poetry, and a host of legislative and political struggles, women were able to challenge the long history of sexist conditioning and create a new self-understanding that has begun to succeed in making women feel less like victims while simultaneously challenging the objective sexist social and economic structures that helped shape that consciousness.

In lieu of a Sadat on either side, we need to develop political approaches to mass psychology similar to those of the women's movement but shaped to take into account the specific needs of the realities of the situation in the Middle East.

Let's start by considering one aspect of the problem: how to deal with the trauma of two thousand years of oppression that culminated in the Holocaust.

There are those today, including some who write for *Tikkun,* who think that the solution is to forget the past. For example, they claim that the Jewish people have focused too much on the Holocaust and for that reason have become obsessed. The Jews would be better off, they say, if they could forget their past.

I think they are deeply mistaken. A trauma can be dealt with only by being brought up again and then worked through under conditions in which we have greater mastery.

Hasn't that been done? No—quite the contrary. The first twenty years of Israel were marked by massive denial and shame about the Holocaust—and the people who went through it were told to keep their stories to themselves, because they represented precisely what Israel had been set up to negate and overcome. David Grossman's recent novel *See Under: Love* and Gila Almagor's film *Summer of Aviya* give moving accounts of this period in Israeli life.

After the Six Day War, the Holocaust was put on the front burner—but in a method that was designed to integrate the past into a Zionist historiography that emphasized Jewish power and reviled Jewish impotence. Yom Hashoah, National Holocaust Memorial Day, was titled also "leegvurah"—to emphasize our strength, not our weakness and vulnerability. Museums were built, institutions erected, commemorations instituted—all in the service of avoidance of the actual emotional experiences, and with little focus on the detailed stories of the experiences that people had gone through.

Israel needs a massive retelling of that history through

the experience of the survivors—in thousands of small groups, with sympathetic listeners who can tell the survivors that they are secure now, that they are less vulnerable, that they do not need to see Nazis all around them. Training Israelis in how to be good listeners in such a group may be central to this process. It is not just the survivors and their children who need this therapy; most Israelis of European descent have shaped their identity in reaction to the pain and humiliation of this historical victimization, and they would benefit by being able to acknowledge the personal feelings of shame and pain and rage that get displaced onto Israeli political life.

Zalman Schachter has suggested one mass psychology intervention that goes some distance in the direction that we must travel. Rabbi Schachter suggests that the peace movement should create a *mikva* ceremony for Israelis who are returning to civilian life after a period of serving in the Israeli reserves. The ceremonial immersion in water, a traditional purification act, is meant to convey our notion that the current service in the Israeli army in the West Bank necessarily leads Israelis to perform actions that pollute the soul. At the very least, the *mikva* is meant as an affirmation that we do not wish to bring the destructive psychodynamics generated by being part of an army of occupation into the rest of Israeli life. While such a process may not go far enough in asserting our opposition to the occupation, and while it presents the potential danger of being misused as a symbolic washing of our hands of the moral dirtiness of the occupation, it has the value, in the hands of a psychologically sophisticated peace movement, of affirming Jewish tradition and using that tradition as a mechanism of critique of current Israeli policy. Similar and more dramatic techniques are necessary to develop a political practice that is sensitive to the psychological realities of the Israeli population, and that incorporates a sensitivity and compassion for the people whose views we hope to change.

A similar kind of thinking will be necessary to deal with the legacy of pain among the Sephardim and Palestinians. For example, if the Ashkenazi-dominated peace forces were to begin their public campaigns with an honest and public recounting of the actual ways that Ashkenazi Israel has demeaned Sephardim in the past, it might then be possible to generate an audience for ideas about how to move beyond the current political impasse. Since the intifada began, Israeli activists have organized gatherings in which Israelis and Palestinians meet in each other's homes for small dialogue groups. It would be an important advance if the peace movement were to arrange similar groups so that they could meet and listen to Israeli Sephardim, listen to their anger and pain, and then move beyond this pain with them. The very act of providing this kind of listening environment, either in small groups or in larger communal settings, would provide a validation to many who still burn with rage at the way they or their parents were treated by the Labor-party–led government of Israel decades ago.

I do not know the Palestinian community well enough to know the specific forms that mass psychological strategy might take. But the analysis presented here suggests that those in the Palestinian world who are serious about changing the current reality must address this question with the greatest of seriousness and urgency.

There are, of course, dangers with any attempt to deal with the psychological dynamics of the current situation. For one thing, there is a temptation to use psychological categories as a club with which to covertly assert our own moral superiority over those whom we wish to help—in effect, covertly blaming the victims for their own oppression. The current tragic situation in the Middle East was created not by the moral turpitude of either the Jewish or the Palestinian people, but by a configuration of world historical forces over which neither people had much influence. The Jewish people do not need to be told how bad and irrational they are—this will only increase the self-blaming. The core of the problem is that both people have internalized a sense of inadequacy and self-blame—based on the denial of their fundamental human needs for recognition and mutual confirmation—and have compensated for these feelings with massive denial, massive chauvinism, and massive attempts to make themselves emotionally and militarily invulnerable. Nothing will be helpful that reinforces the notion that Israelis and Palestinians are *right* to feel bad about themselves, that they really *are* inadequate, that they are worse than other peoples. What both sides need is a massive dose of self-worth that would replace the pseudo-forms of self-worth they get through posturing and denying the legitimacy of each other's pains.

A psychological orientation should also not prevent us from simultaneously articulating moral outrage at Israeli policies that deny the humanity of the Palestinian people, or outrage at callous and inhumane Palestinian acts (like the bus massacre on the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem highway) that have been justified in the name of fighting oppression.

It's fashionable today to be skeptical of all psychological approaches, to see them as reductive or flaky attempts to avoid "real politics." There are many who believe that dealing with the underlying pains discussed here would take too long, and that solutions are obtainable through diplomatic breakthroughs. I would not be surprised in fact if we see some such breakthroughs in the period ahead. But just reaching the table will not

necessarily lead to a resolution of the conflict. Once the U.S. sat down with the Vietnamese in 1968 there were years of meaningless chatter that led nowhere until a series of changes in domestic politics forced the U.S. to change its position. Though U.S. diplomats believe that the very fact of negotiations would generate a new psychological dynamic, it might actually generate a new pessimism and despair if negotiations become merely another vehicle to perpetuate the status quo. It may yet prove true that dealing with the underlying psychological dynamics is the most effective approach to bringing peace to the Middle East. □

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE OCCUPATION

# Just Legal: Human Rights in the Territories

*Dedi Zucker*

For the first time since 1967, the topic of human rights has become a major theme in Israeli public debate. Israelis can no longer ignore the fact that human rights in the territories are being violated daily on a scale unprecedented in the country's brief history. Abuse of these rights, in an effort to put down the intifada, has served only to fuel Palestinian resentment and to strengthen worldwide support for the Palestinian cause. A vicious circle of abuse, rebellion, and further abuse has increased the death toll on both sides and is now threatening the moral foundations of Israeli society. And yet no end to the abuse is in sight. A sober examination of the human rights issue in the territories might bring us a step or two closer to the axis on which this vicious circle turns.

Realistic discussion of the human rights issue in the territories can, however, be carried on only in a broader context. We should remember, for example, that while a great deal of media attention has been paid to the issue, rights are being violated as a result of *national* conflict. A satisfactory answer to the political question is an essential prerequisite for any real progress on the human rights front.

We should also remember that debate over the issue of human rights takes place within the framework of overwhelmingly concrete security considerations. The number of participants, the high level of friction, and the intensity of the clashes between the Palestinians and the IDF define the events of the past eighteen months as a battle, not a series of disturbances, demonstrations, or even riots. Police terminology is no longer appropriate for what is happening in the occupied territories. Often what appears to be a violation of human rights actually involves a confrontation characteristic of armed national struggle.

I should note at the outset that even the harshest violations of the Palestinians' elementary rights are permitted under the law, as it has stood in the territories since 1967. The validity of that law (which is based on the British Emergency Defense Regulations of 1945) is another matter. What needs to be stressed here is that the IDF's tactics are not rooted in the "private" policies of individual commanders or their units. The majority of the actions originate in decisions taken on the political level and executed by either civilian or military agents. Brutality constitutes a relatively minor element in the overall picture.

By shutting down the entire West Bank educational system for eighteen months, greater long-term damage was done than that inflicted by individual, insubordinate soldiers in hundreds of incidents at roadblocks. Shutting down the schools, colleges, and universities infringed upon the well-being of some 250,000 people daily for 540 days. This operation was essentially administrative; it involved no violence, required hardly any action on the IDF's part, and—the absurd truth be told—met the test of Israeli law.

Likewise, tens of thousands of Palestinians spend entire days waiting in lengthy, bothersome lines for driver's licenses or departure permits. The prohibition against working in Israel, leveled at the residents of Gaza in May of 1989, is clearly one of the harshest measures this population has faced since the uprising began. Again, it was a political decision, implemented in an administrative and relatively simple manner. In one stroke, the Israeli government temporarily deprived tens of thousands of Gazan breadwinners of their livelihood. Forty percent of Gaza's workers found themselves unable

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to provide food and other staples for their families.

While the deportation of sixty-three residents of the territories and the destruction of roughly two hundred houses (some one hundred other homes have been sealed for security reasons) provides a flashier and more photogenic form of punishment, administrative actions such as the ones detailed above harm more people for longer periods of time but are regularly overlooked.

## Punishment in Accordance with the Law

The situation in the territories illustrates how seriously the concepts "legal" and "just" may contradict each other. All administrative detentions in the occupied territories are carried out in accordance with the law, as adjusted by the military commander to suit "the needs of the hour." Parliamentary and public reviews are bypassed. Individual indictments and trials are dispensed with. It's all legal: the warrant, the officer's signature, and the detention procedure. But none of it is just. At the present writing, Israel has held approximately seven thousand persons for six months or more without trial.

That the Geneva Convention and other international agreements have not been incorporated into domestic Israeli law only makes life easier for the Ministries of Defense and Justice. Most of the punitive measures that entail revocation of the Palestinians' elementary rights are approved by the judicial authorities. Defense authorities encounter no resistance, for example, when they impose curfews as a means of punishment. One particularly turbulent refugee camp has spent some 170 days under curfew since the uprising began.

By refusing to incorporate international law into its own legislation, Israel has been able to employ a lengthy series of measures that show nothing but contempt for the enemy's most basic rights. Israel, for instance, has often exercised the right to keep villagers from harvesting their crops because local youth throw stones, put up PLO flags, and hurl petrol bombs; and while the Geneva Convention forbids the incarceration of prisoners within the occupying state's confines, Israel chooses to keep approximately six thousand of the eight thousand intifada detainees within the borders of Israel proper, along with all of the administrative detainees.

That said, it is important to note that the conditions of detention have improved perceptibly over the past several months. The facilities where the intifada detainees and prisoners are held are by no means brutal dungeons. They are under the control of the judicial authorities and are relatively accessible for public review.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the legal situation in the territories concerns the Supreme Court. For years the Supreme Court served to check the defense establishment. These reins, which worked reasonably well for many years, are no longer effective. The Supreme Court has done little to limit army activity during the uprising, and knowledge that harsh measures will ultimately gain the High Court's seal of approval has penetrated deep into the consciousness of military decision makers. (The Court's recent unanimous decision granting Palestinian detainees the right to an appeal prior to the demolition of their houses provides a notable exception to standard procedure. Previously, soldiers either blew up or bulldozed the homes of suspects within several hours of arrest. Household members were typically given less than an hour to gather their belongings.)

*Human rights in the territories are being violated daily on a scale unprecedented in the country's brief history.*

In short, the Israeli judicial system, like other bureaucracies in the country, has become schizophrenic. While "legal" and "just" typically coincide in Israel proper, in the occupied territories these terms are less consonant.

## Ineffectual Punishment

Israeli policymakers expect punishment to change the Palestinians' behavior. In the case at hand, however, many of the punitive measures meted out by the defense establishment are aimed less at specific suspects than at the entire population, which is perceived as criminal through and through. More often than not, such punishment involves the revocation of rights (as with the closing of schools). It should be clear by now, nineteen months into the uprising, that the arbitrary, collective, and long-term suspension of rights, in a context of national struggle, has questionable effect on the level of violence and on Palestinian civil resistance. The Palestinians' willingness to pay a steep price for freedom renders Israel's punitive measures largely irrelevant. If Israel's leaders are to be believed, the intifada should have died out several times over by now, for whenever Israel metes out a new set of punishments, the public is promised that "[t]his time the intifada will die down to a 'tolerable level.'"

There is in fact no realistic basis for arguing that Israel must accept being portrayed as a repressive state if it wants to maintain relative order and security. On the contrary, one can cite many instances in which punitive actions involving blatant violations of elementary rights only encouraged the resistance and pushed Palestinian violence to yet higher levels. It can be shown, for

example, that blowing up houses fails to pacify population groups in the vicinity. In fact, the demolition tends to recur in the same villages and towns, and at relatively brief intervals, this despite the severity of a punishment that leaves entire families homeless in its wake.

### The Judicial System

Since the uprising began, approximately 45,000 persons have been arrested. The resources of the army's judicial system, however, have not been augmented at all. Small wonder, then, that most of the detainees have not been tried, that many have been released from detention without trial, and that others have had their confinement extended until the end of legal proceedings, waiting months just for their trials to begin. Faulty organization, general disorder, and delays in bringing witnesses (soldiers) to the trials have caused thousands of detainees to remain incarcerated for months longer than necessary. The logistical improvements of the past few months have not changed anything. Detention is used as a way not only to complete an investigation, but also to administer punishment without having to establish guilt. As the capacities of the incarceration facilities increase it will be possible to punish additional thousands of detainees before trial.

### Punishment and Human Rights Abuses: A Vicious Circle

When we analyze Israel's punitive measures and the grave human rights violations attendant to many of them, we find that the punishments are cyclical and, therefore, predictable. Every few months, Israeli policymakers sense that their efforts to put down the uprising have failed; they then decide on new measures. The Palestinians suffer initial shock, and the level of violence in the territories falls off. But as the Palestinians recover, everyone adjusts to the new status quo—until the next battery of punishments is brought on.

In sum, the number and severity of human rights violations since the uprising began have forced the human rights issue to the fore so that it is no longer treated as an exclusively political matter that will "solve itself" as a political solution is found. It is, rather, an issue of substance that will demand its place in our private and public lives for as long as the uprising continues. For the first time, the government of Israel senses pressure from within as well as from without, pressure demanding that Israel modify its behavior.

It would be erroneous, however, to believe that the issue of human rights has become a decisive consideration in the decision-making process in Israel. While sensitivity to the issue on a large scale has altered Israel's political vocabulary, Israeli society has yet to internalize the profound duty to safeguard human rights. □

## Suppression on the West Bank

**Deaths** Since the uprising began in December 1987, 502 Palestinian residents of the occupied territories have been killed—482 by Israeli soldiers and 20 by Israeli civilians.

470 of the deaths were by shooting; among the dead were 22 children aged 12 or younger, and 76 children aged 13–16.

32 Palestinians died from other causes (beatings, burns, etc.); among these fatalities were 3 children aged 12 or younger.

Another 71 people died shortly after exposure to tear gas, including some 30 infants. (From a medical point of view it is difficult to determine that exposure to tear gas is the direct and sole cause of death in a given instance.)

**Casualties** There are no definitive statistics regarding the number of Palestinians wounded during the uprising; the UNWRA estimate—69,000—is probably inflated.

**Detainees** As of July 12, 1989, 8,682 Palestinian residents of the occupied territories were in detention centers, according to the IDF spokesperson. Of these, 1,847 had been tried and sentenced, 1,449 were awaiting trial, and 3,432 were in the midst of adjudication. An additional 1,954 Palestinians were being held in administrative detention.

**Deportations** 53 Palestinian residents of the occupied territories have been deported during the uprising—31 from the West Bank and 22 from Gaza.

**Demolition of Houses** According to the IDF spokesperson, 227 houses were demolished and 102 houses were sealed in the occupied territories through July 4, 1989.

—Information supplied by B'Tselem.

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE OCCUPATION

# Plant a Tree, Get Married, Have a Child, Build a House

*Avigdor Feldman*

*You expelled our children in the name of demography;*
*You stole our land in the name of geography;*
*You closed our school in the name of pedagogy:*
*Your rulers are our tragedy.*
—*Mommy,* a rock fantasy by Hillel Mittelpunkt

## A GENETIC FREAK

Last year the State Department issued two "shifter reports" on human rights in Israel. The major one deals with the occupied territories, while its shorter, junior counterpart deals with human rights in the State of Israel proper.

The two reports refer to the same body—a genetic freak, one of whose arms is a muscular club- and rifle-wielding limb while the other is tender and caressing. In 1988 the violent arm killed 366 Palestinians, wounded twenty thousand, deported thirty-six, detained some five thousand without trial, and demolished or sealed up 154 houses, thus leaving a thousand Palestinians homeless. The record for this year is not going to be lower: the death toll, after six months, is 120.

How was this genetic mutation conceived and born? The gentle and brutal arms are nourished by the same blood supply. In many cases the same administrative and judicial organs deal with the occupied territories and with the State of Israel proper; but voices have not been raised in criticism of the policy of beatings, indiscriminate shootings, and mass arrests in the territories.

One source of the bad blood flowing to the territories is the throbbing heart that keeps the entire organism alive—Israel's Supreme Court. Israeli authorities see the Court as the paragon of legal enlightenment. In truth, it is a peephole into the mechanisms of defense, rejection, and evasion practiced by Israeli society when confronted with what is taking place in the territories.

A young, inexperienced Court, lacking a constitution for guidance, lacking a real legal tradition—what can it do with so much power? Until 1967, the Supreme Court had never deported anyone, never demolished a house; administrative detainees were a phenomenon as rare as military government orders nullified by the Court.

Anyone who reads the Court's decisions dealing with the occupied territories has to be impressed by the Court's total lack of compassion for the residents of the territories. This is the case not only for decisions founded on security considerations (it stands to reason that these considerations usually prevail over humanitarian motives), but also with regard to the justices' attitude toward the Palestinians' daily concerns: the basic practices of planting a tree, getting married, having a child, and building a house. In this light, it is not surprising that out of seven hundred petitions submitted to the Supreme Court by residents of the territories, only four have been granted.

## THE SUPREME COURT PLANTS A TREE

Consider the case of a land expropriation order that took place a number of years before the intifada and that foreshadowed its arrival. Because of an erroneous entry in the land registry, a similarity in the names of fathers and sons, the appellants before the Court included two men who had died before their land was expropriated and even before the IDF (in 1967) had overrun the out-of-the-way village in which the appellants had lived. The dead souls and the living residents asked the Court to nullify an order issued by the district military governor expropriating their land for a bypass around Kalkilya that would lead to Jewish settlements—part of the network of roads that Israel is building on the West Bank.

The military administration has an insatiable appetite for Arab land. There are a thousand and one schemes for transferring land to Jewish control: expropriation, proclamation, closing off, prohibition of entry; declaring the territory ancient Jewish land, land within shouting distance of a city, state land, or dead land. Other orders, dealing with the protection of wild animals, the supervision of tilled ground, and the marketing of agricultural produce, also lead to land seizures. In order to understand this phenomenon, one must become familiar with

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the arcane language and secret code of the military administration.

The dead souls and their fellow petitioners argued before the Supreme Court that the road network being constructed by the State of Israel on the West Bank required massive financial investment and the expropriation of thousands of *dunams* of Arab land, and that it irreversibly altered the geography of the occupied area. The petitioners relied on international law and the Geneva and Hague conventions, which stipulate that the occupying power must maintain the status quo and change only what is absolutely necessary for the security and safety of the occupying army. It is abundantly clear that the planned roads were a shortcut from the borders of the State of Israel to Jewish settlements in the territories. An occupier has no right to expropriate land in order to pave access roads to settlements, which are themselves illegal: so argued counsel for the petitioners. The state denied that the roads were intended to serve the settlers. True, the roads seemed to be drawn between existing or planned Israeli settlements, but that was purely a coincidence, a result of planning considerations determined by topography, not by ideology. In any case, argued the state, the ultimate purpose of the roads was military and was linked to defense of the nation's existence.

The Court rejected the assertion that the roads were meant to serve the settlements and accepted the state's arguments that there was a military rationale for the expropriation. With broad brushstrokes the justices painted the West Bank as a vast, almost apocalyptic battlefield. The full dimensions of the military administration's fraudulent case were reflected in the following section of the Court's decision:

> It can be assumed that the military authorities who shouldered the task of planning and building this road network, whose cost is very high, did not do so merely in order to ease civilian traffic and sustain the environment, and that the prime consideration for them was the military aspect. Should, heaven forbid, a war break out and there be a need to move troops through Judea and Samaria, their transit is liable to take longer because the existing roads are tortuous, narrow, and long, and also because motor traffic is liable to block them altogether or to slow down traffic on them. Alternative roads, short, wide and straight, which do not pass through populated areas, are a strategic asset of prime importance in wartime.

These wide and straight roads waited four years for an invasion from the east, which never materialized. Then came a group of teachers from East Jerusalem with a strange tale that began with their desire to set up their own neighborhood east of the city. Each of them purchased a plot in an area zoned for residential construction and submitted an application for a building permit. Fearing that a joint request would be summarily rejected, they spread out the submissions over a period of time. The applications were duly approved until some diligent clerk in the Interior Ministry checked and discovered that, in effect, the building permits created an Arab neighborhood within the ring of Jewish settlements east of the city. Suddenly, overnight, the map of the main West Bank road system sprouted an essential interchange on the teachers' lands—and the land was expropriated. Instead of building an Arab neighborhood in a Jewish district, the teachers found themselves seeking relief from the Supreme Court.

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*Anyone who uses these roads cannot escape the feeling that he or she is travelling on a road to nowhere through a country of ghosts.*

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The Court demonstrated that anything the military administration can do, it can do better. During the four years since the first case, something strange had happened to the road network: it had grown winding limbs and imaginary tentacles. The straight and severe lines that had once typified it, which the Court had examined and found to be a strategic asset of paramount importance, had almost disappeared. The road network had been transformed—from a geometric drawing by Josef Albers into something by Jackson Pollock. But two characteristic motifs remained as before: all of the roads led to Israel, and they still linked the country with Jewish settlements. In any case, the road network had lost whatever security justifications it might previously have had. The panel that heard the teachers' appeal was headed by Justice Aharon Barak, who wrote the decision in the case. He wrote:

> The respondents assert that the purpose of the road network is to serve the area. It will permit rapid travel among the towns and villages of Judea and Samaria. It will serve the local population of Ramallah, Bir Naballa, Jedida, Nabi Samuel, Beit Iksa, Beit Hanina, Bidu, Rafat, and Bethlehem.

This new road map seems to have posed serious problems for the security argument, so much so that Israel decided to abandon that argument altogether, exposing the fraudulent nature of its claims in the earlier case of the dead souls. Israel chose to ground its claim on "the needs of the local population"—one of the occupation regime's most devious legal concepts,

born when the legal framework of military and defense needs had been exhausted.

The claim that the roads were paved for the good of the Arab residents of the West Bank is clearly disingenuous. No one really believes that the State of Israel sets as a top priority the transportation needs of rural districts of the West Bank, which are sparsely populated and are not faced with a significant volume of motor traffic. Anyone who uses these roads, which have already been paved, cannot escape the feeling that he or she is traveling on a road to nowhere through a country of ghosts, so stark is the contrast between the rural landscape and the multilane, deserted highways.

## The Supreme Court Marries and Has a Child

This is the family reunification policy in the territories, as applied to the family of Samira, mother of six children. She was born in Beit Sahur, south of Jerusalem. Samira left in 1968, went to Venezuela, and, in the words of the Court, "cut her ties with the region." About ten years later, a man also from Beit Sahur took a trip to Venezuela, where he met and married Samira. She reentered Israel on a three-month tourist visa. Time flew. Samira loved her birthplace and didn't leave the country when the visa expired. Within seven years she had six children. One day her papers were examined at a chance roadblock, and it was discovered that she was living in the country illegally. The Supreme Court approved her deportation and rejected her husband's request for reunification with her and their six children. The Court held that a marriage between a resident of the territories and someone from outside the territories is insufficient ground for allowing the spouse to live there—even though she was born there.

In other cases, the Court has upheld this policy and applied it to people born in the territories—to families that may have been living in the West Bank or Gaza for more than ten generations, and to people who have left the area to pursue their studies, to find work, or simply to travel.

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that in matters of family reunification it accepts without reservation the policies of the military government. These policies dictate that such requests be approved only in those rare instances when the authorities have a security, political, or economic interest in granting the petition. Someone who wishes to be reunited with his wife and children, or to return to the land of his youth, must provide a special reason why such reunification should be allowed.

Love, happiness, intimacy, parenthood, a sense of belonging to the landscape of one's birthplace—none of these are special reasons. These cases do not involve security concerns: no one argues that the petitioner poses a danger to the public welfare or that bringing a husband, wife, and children together poses a threat to security. Human concern has disappeared. You can't go home again—it's as simple as that.

One might compare these decisions with legislation dealing with the rights of Jewish immigrants. How are we to reconcile the principle that an Arab who leaves the country for a time has severed his or her ties to the area, with the central and seemingly most significant motif in Israeli legal culture, namely, the right of return, reflected throughout our legal corpus? The contradiction is massive and can hardly be overstated.

## The Supreme Court Builds a House

Beginning in 1947, a Mr. Burkan and his family lived in one of the houses in the Jewish Quarter in East Jerusalem. The area was under Jordanian rule then. In 1967 it was occupied by Israel, and the Burkan family was evacuated. In 1978 the Company for the Rehabilitation and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City published an advertisement inviting the public to purchase flats there. Burkan offered to buy the apartment in which he and his family had lived a few years earlier, but eligibility was restricted to Israeli citizens who served in the army or who belonged to Jewish organizations prior to 1948. So the company refused to accept Burkan's bid. The Supreme Court approved the conditions laid down for the tender. It held that the Jewish Quarter of the Old City was being rehabilitated "only because the Jordanian Army invaded it, expelled the Jews, and pillaged their property. The renovation is intended to restore the ancient glory of the Jewish settlement in the Old City, so that Jews will once again, as in the past, have their own quarter there." The attorney general representing the company admitted in court that the criteria were devised to exclude non-Jews.

The law selects a history for those subject to its jurisdiction. The history chosen determines the starting point from which the law applies and the central myth to which the legal system gives life.

The Israeli legal system has chosen a Jewish version of history. It does not recognize the Arabs as possessing a history of their own; at best they are seen as part of the supporting cast of Jewish history. Hence, in the Burkan case, the Court could support its decision by relating a tale that began at a time when the Jewish Quarter was inhabited by Jews, rather than a tale that started with the war of June 1967, or with the Crusaders, or with Saladin, or with the day when Burkan's uncles or cousins were expelled from a village within the borders of Israel.

The intifada has changed the texture of the occupa-

tion. Before it erupted, the occupation was expressed chiefly in texts, in court verdicts, and in military government orders. The intifada has peeled away the paper texts and has revealed the violence lurking underneath—violence that was always there.

Supreme Court justices who demolish houses, divide families, uproot trees, pull out the land from under the feet of its inhabitants, and decree for these inhabitants a life of invisibility are no less violent than soldiers who beat and shoot in a blind rage. The State Department reports of previous years, which refrained from condemning Israel for its actions in the territories, did not realize at the time that Israeli morality was being slowly but inexorably eroded. □

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE OCCUPATION

# The Decline of the Labor Party

*Haim Baram*

Little more than an empty shell, the Labor party today is well organized but devoid of any real political direction. Worse—it lacks the will to live. Everyone understands this; the dirges have begun. The party's internal intrigues are endless, pathetic outcries for Shimon Peres's head abound, and party hacks have begun to regroup around Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Labor is in decline because it has failed to define a viable political alternative to Israel's right-wing leadership. For several years prior to the 1988 elections, Shimon Peres spent much of his public credibility defending the possibility of a "Jordanian option" as a realistic way to deal with the West Bank. Under the plan, Jordan's King Hussein would negotiate for the Palestinians through a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. In advocating the "Jordanian option," Peres implicitly denied the importance of Palestinian national self-determination and statehood. Once the intifada began and Hussein himself renounced any Jordanian claim to representation of West Bank Palestinians, Peres's plan was rendered obsolete, if not ludicrous.

As the elections approached, Labor was forced to change its position at the last moment and support the notion of "land for peace." Having spent the previous four years advocating a different course of action, however, Labor found itself unable to explain its new position to the public. Then, after the (1988) electoral defeat, Labor refused to take on the role of an opposition party that would work to build a new national consensus around the concept of "land for peace." Instead, Labor entered the national unity government, providing what *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner described as a "fig leaf" for Shamir's policy of perpetuating the occupation.

This "fig leaf" role comes easily to some of Labor's most esteemed leaders, many of whom are covert Likudniks. Yitzhak Rabin is only the most visible of a large group in Labor whose aims and tactics are almost identical to those of the so-called moderate faction of Likud. The differences between Rabin's followers and Shamir's Young Princes (Dan Meridor and Ehud Olmert, for example) are negligible. And even those Labor leaders who do have some ideological differences with Shamir are quick to subordinate these differences to their own self-interest. Wishing above all else to remain in the corridors of power, many Labor party leaders are willing to make critical statements about Likud's position and then oppose any actions that would actually break up the government. Moshe Shahal (Minister of Energy), Gad Ya'acobi (Minister of Communication) and Motta Gur (Minister Without Portfolio) are three leading candidates for the Labor party's leadership. All, Ya'acobi and Shahal in particular, make occasional, vaguely dovish noises but end up echoing Rabin.

The United Kibbutz Movement (Takam) plays an even more conservative role. Shimon Peres's position as Finance Minister provides Takam with the best possibility it has of receiving the kind of governmental support needed to bail out the economically strapped kibbutzim. Takam can reasonably argue that a Likud government would be delighted to see the collapse of these last vestiges of the "socialist" ideas upon which the Labor party was founded. Less reasonable is the expansionist ideology of the Takam representatives in the government, Avraham Katz-Oz (Agriculture) and Ya'acov Tzur (Health). Labor's new fig-leaf role doesn't trouble them.

Ezer Weizmann is the only major figure who consis-

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tently votes for breaking away from Likud. But Weizmann is a new member of the party. He has neither deep roots nor a following in Labor, and can do very little in his current capacity as—appropriately enough—Minister Without Portfolio.

Due to the Labor leaders' collusion with Likud, Labor has failed to define any consistent alternative viewpoint on the fundamental issue of the West Bank and Palestinian self-determination. Afraid to be seen as too soft toward the Palestinians, the party continues to react to the right-wing dynamic in Israeli society. Labor refuses, for example, to advocate solutions that might lead to a demilitarized Palestinian state on the West Bank. Without a plausible scenario for peace, however, Labor is unable to help the Israelis consider alternatives to occupation.

No wonder Israeli society has moved to the right. Because the major party on the left offers neither vision nor vigorous analysis, most Israelis identify the rhetoric of the right with "common sense." Labor party leaders then use this rightward shift to defend their middle-of-the-road approach. Any election held in the short run, they say, would result in a loss of seats for Labor in the Knesset.

Are Labor's fears justified? Consider the events of July 1989, when Sharon forced Shamir to accept the following restrictions for any election plan for the West Bank: (1) no land for peace; (2) no vote for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem; (3) no elections until the intifada ends; (4) continued building of new settlements. At first, Labor acted boldly, some members telling the press that Labor might quit the government. But these same "bold" Labor members were quick to accept a weak assurance from Shamir that Likud's vote on the restrictions did not change matters. (Shamir was telling the truth; after all, Sharon and other Likud hard-liners were only making explicit the points Shamir had in mind all along.) Why, then, did Labor capitulate? Because, interpreting a certain poll conducted by Modi'in Ezrahi for the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv,* they were afraid of losing votes.

But take a closer look at that poll. It predicted that Labor would obtain only twenty-eight seats in an election, a net loss of eleven seats. Yet only two of those seats were predicted to go to Likud. Five would go to the Citizens Rights Movement (Ratz) and four to Mapam—both parties that are willing to articulate a dovish position. Indeed, some Israeli analysts are beginning to consider the possibility that the "Pragmatic-Expansionist" wing of Labor might someday unite with the Shamir–Arens group to form a new Likud. Sharon's forces would create a new, protofascist radical right while the doves and two-state-solution supporters in Labor would merge with the Zionist left (Mapam and Ratz).

Even if this realignment of forces is not imminent, one thing is certain: Labor will continue to flounder. It may lose its majority in the Histadrut this November. If the debate in the Histadrut follows the national pattern, Labor will join Likud in a coalition that will take over Israel's preeminent labor organization. In such a scenario, workers' support for Labor would certainly erode.

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*If there is any hope for Labor it will come from those who are prepared to publicly challenge the party's current direction.*

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Foreign observers tend to regard the Labor party as moderate, even left-wing, much to the amusement of native experts. It is not surprising, then, that the entire international community finds itself incapable of predicting Labor's behavior. Outsiders are unaware of the way in which a given politician can take a very progressive stance on one issue and a reactionary one on another. For example, is there really any intrinsic connection between a dovish stance toward the Palestinians and social-democratic positions on socioeconomic issues? How is it that well-known doves such as Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin support Milton-Friedman–style economic policies (thereby alienating the working class and the poor, who are, in any event, already attracted to right-wing nationalist policies)?

To help *Tikkun* readers understand these complexities, I've prepared a detailed chart of the positions of the Labor party's Knesset faction. These thirty-nine Knesset Members (M.K.s) are the most visible and influential elements of the Labor Party leadership, the hub of all of Labor's political activities. The chart's categories deal with a given M.K.'s position on the Palestinians and on socioeconomic questions. I've devised a series of evaluative "pegs" to classify Knesset Members.

In the political arena, we find:

1. *Pragmatic-Expansionists.* Labor M.K.s in this category strive for the retention of parts of the occupied territories without formal annexation. In theory, they accept the possibility of partial Israeli withdrawal, which would rid Israel of the densely populated urban areas in the occupied territories. They realize that this position is totally unacceptable to the Palestinians and to their former would-be partners, the Jordanians. Automatic Palestinian opposition is what makes this position attractive, since it allows the Pragmatic-Expansionists to employ a peace-seeking rhetoric while they perpetuate the occupation. Like the Shamir–Arens camp in Likud, the Pragmatic-Expansionists appreciate Israel's depen-

dence on the international community, especially the U.S. They are, therefore, sensitive to North American Jewish opinion. They place a high value on presenting their case sweetly and subtly, often framing their positions in such a way as to ensure that the Palestinians appear to be the ones who reject peace. For example, the Pragmatic-Expansionists are careful to insist that their wars are always "defensive," their settlements on the West Bank "pioneering," and their motives humanitarian.

2. *Doves.* These are M.K.s who accept the inevitability of serious territorial concessions. Doves reject many of the settlement policies in the West Bank and Gaza. Most were wary of Sharon during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. They are vociferous in their concern about the brutalization of Israeli society, which they consider a direct consequence of the long occupation. They lack a shared vision of a concrete, acceptable peace plan, and they insist that a unified Jerusalem be the capital of Israel.

3. *Two Staters.* These M.K.s are doves who advocate Israeli withdrawal from most of the occupied territories and are ready to have the Israeli government negotiate directly with the PLO. Most of the Two Staters are "constructively vague" about the future of Jerusalem, but they do accept the Palestinian right to self-determination, and they are reluctantly willing to accept an independent Palestinian state.

On socioeconomic questions, the following categories may be useful:

1. *Reaganite-Thatcherite Conservatives.* These are Laborites who belong, more or less, to the Milton Friedman school of thought. They believe in using governmental policies to contrive unemployment and recession as remedies for inflation. They are anti-union, unless the unions are fully controlled. They have a deep faith in the free market as a natural cure for economic problems.

2. *Middle-of-the-Road Conservatives.* These are Laborites who support a mixed economy, based on private enterprise, some governmental intervention, industrial peace, and coexistence between private and public sectors. They espouse "moderate" unemployment and support cautious anti-inflationary policies. They see the Histadrut and its weak economic and industrial enterprises as a liability rather than an asset, but fear that a possible defeat in the Histadrut elections will strengthen Likud's claim as the rightful governing party.

3. *Social Democrats.* These are the more Histadrut-oriented M.K.s who emphasize economic growth as a remedy for unemployment, and moderate, "compassionate" measures to curb inflation. They advocate the belief that employers and employees should shoulder economic burdens equally. The Social Democrats oppose drastic cuts in social services, though they also oppose unofficial strikes. They support public and cooperative enterprises, but the old enthusiasm and pioneering zeal have been abandoned. They have gradually given up the cause of salaried employees to socialist Mapam and to the populist factions within Likud.

When reading reports of Israeli politics, *Tikkun* readers may find it helpful to have a chart of the Labor Party M.K.s' stance on these issues, in order to check the general orientation of a given M.K. The evaluations, of course, are my own:

*LABOR MEMBERS OF KNESSET: WHERE THEY STAND*

| *Name* | *Israel/ Palestine* | *Socio-economics* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. S. Peres | Dove | R.T. Conserv. |
| 2. Y. Rabin | P.E. | R.T. Conserv. |
| 3. Y. Navon | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 4. Y. Kessar (Histadrut) | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 5. E. Weizmann | Two Stater | R.T. Conserv. |
| 6. S. Hillel | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 7. U. Baram | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 8. M. Shahal | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 9. O. Namir | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 10. S. Arbeli-Almoslino | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 11. G. Yaacobi | Dove | M.R. Conserv. |
| 12. Y. Tsur | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 13. M. Gur | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 14. H. Ramon | Two Stater | M.R. Conserv. |
| 15. A. Katz-Oz | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 16. D. Libai | Dove | M.R. Conserv. |
| 17. H. Bar-Lev | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 18. A. Peretz | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 19. R. Edri | Dove | M.R. Conserv. |
| 20. L. Eliav | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 21. A. Burg | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 22. A. Shohat | Dove | Social Dem. |
| 23. S. Shetreet | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 24. M. Harish | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 25. B. Ben Eliezer | Dove | No category |
| 26. E. Dayan | Dove | Social Dem. |
| 27. N. Arad | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 28. Y. Beilin | Two Stater | R.T. Conserv. |
| 29. G. Gal | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 30. S. Weiss | Dove (but pro-Rabin) | Social Dem. |
| 31. E. Ben-Menachem | Undecided | Social Dem. |
| 32. M. Bar-Zohar | P.E. | M.R. Conserv. |
| 33. E. Zisman | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 34. E. Gur | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 35. N. Massalha (Arab) | Two Stater | Social Dem. |
| 36. H. Meirom (Takam) | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 37. R. Cohen | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 38. M. Goldman | P.E. | Social Dem. |
| 39. E. Solodar | P.E. | Social Dem. |

It should be clear from this chart that there is no correlation between an M.K.'s views on social issues and her or his stance on the Palestinian issue. Two of the Labor party leaders, Rabin and Bar-Lev, have personally engineered the government's policy in the West Bank—a policy responsible for documented cases of torture, killing, wounding, and deportation. When it comes to human rights issues in the territories, six of these M.K.s are sensitive, twelve are extremely callous, and the rest maintain righteous sentiments but are unwilling to confront the human rights violations that their policies helped create.

Given the complex differences on economic questions and the Palestinian issue, it is hard to imagine that a group of Labor Doves could emerge with sufficient ideological coherence to challenge the old leadership. Two Staters might be able to win over many of the Doves, but many of these Doves would be unwilling to take steps that would force them to follow the leadership of Two Staters onto social-democratic terrain. Therefore, it is unlikely that we will see a coherent opposition make any serious attempt to wrest power from the current leadership. Peres himself, despite his vagaries, may be able to maintain his position of power precisely by warning other Doves and Two Staters that, without him, power might fall into the hands of the Rabin wing of the party.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are six Labor party M.K.s who have demonstrated considerable courage in the present situation. Abraham Burg, Haim Ramon, Ora Namir, D. Libai, Yossi Beilin, and N. Massalha have all shown great sensitivity to violations of human rights, and have spoken out unequivocally in condemnation of the policies set by Yitzhak Rabin. Their willingness to criticize Rabin, despite Rabin's growing strength within the Labor party, has enhanced their stature both within Israel and internationally. These six have become the nucleus of a larger group of Laborite doves who may yet attempt to organize a viable opposition. Indeed, if there is any hope for Labor it will come from those who are prepared to publicly challenge the party's current direction. At the moment there are few indications that these people are willing to mount the kind of public challenge to the Labor leadership that would make it possible to save the party from decline.

Labor, then, is failing in its effort to win public support for its peace politics because it has been unable to communicate a coherent policy that poses a serious alternative to Likud's worldview. Unless it can articulate such an alternative, Labor may find itself a more serious loser in future electoral struggles for power. □

# Shards

*Enid Shomer*

Inside the strict pine
coffin he is wrapped
in a cotton sheet
and over the three
vanities—the eyes and mouth—
potsherds have been placed.
All night a vigilant
Jew sat by the body
while a candle ate
into the dark
and his feet grew rigid
pointing to Jerusalem.
Now we cover him

with tidewater clay.
To slow us down,
to remind us that grief
is a difficult labor, we dig
at first with shovels
turned over, a trickle
of red dirt fine
as hourglass sand.
Then we are permitted
grunting shovelfuls, stabs
that match the cries

of the mourners who watch
from unsteady chairs
as we spade respect
onto the *aron,* Hebrew
for coffin, for clothes closet,
wardrobe, chest of drawers,
that one word conveying
what we hope against:
that nothing can contain us,
that wood itself
is only soil haunting

the above-ground world,
ghosts in solid form.
It is right that burial
begin at the face
with earth baked
into something like a memory
of itself, so that his
humanness can be taken away
from us, so we will not
picture him about to
blink or speak, so we
may begin the leveling
with small rubble.

FICTION

# In Memory of Jane Fogarty

*Jay Neugeboren*

In the gloom and fog of Dublin, who'll ever notice my difference?

Your difference, she replied.

My difference, damn it! You know what I mean—my *craziness*! She showed nothing. Simon looked down at his hands. In the gloom and fog of Dublin, for that matter, who'll notice me?

*In the deserts of the heart, let the healing fountain start.*

Surely Simon had had that verse in mind when he spoke to her of Dublin—and surely, too, he'd had it in mind when he attached to his flight insurance policy a sheet of paper on which, in block letters, he printed five words: IN MEMORY OF JANE FOGARTY.

She reached to the night table, lifted her glass of white wine, drank. She chose not to answer the telephone. Tom's glass was empty. He had left two hours before, at 6 A.M. She listened to her own voice, recorded, asking callers to leave messages at the sound of the tone. She listened to Simon's father telling her that if she didn't agree to meet with him, he would instruct his lawyer to take action against her.

She walked to the bathroom, downed two aspirins, squatted on the toilet, removed her diaphragm, listened to Mr. Pearlstein's voice—like bright morning sun, she thought, like an ocean of holy light!—pour into her apartment. How pleased Simon would be, she thought, could he hear the sound of his father's helplessness and rage.

"We'll give you one more chance. Please call us by noon so we can try to settle this like reasonable human beings. My wife and I have decided that we're prepared to compromise—to give you something. At a time like this we certainly don't intend to drag our son's memory through unpleasantness."

But you will, Jane said. If you get angry and greedy enough, you will. For a half million dollars, there are lots of things we'll do we never suspected we were capable of.

Simon was dead and she was a wealthy woman. Amazing. Simon Pearlstein, twenty-six years old, her patient of nineteen months—thirteen months at the state hospital, six months as an outpatient—had perished along with 221 other passengers when their Boeing 737 charter crashed three days before as it passed over Gander, Newfoundland. Simon Pearlstein—dear, sweet Simon, who brought her a gift each time he came to her office—had outdone himself this time. Before boarding his plane, Simon had taken out a $525,000 accidental death and dismemberment policy, and on it he had named Jane Fogarty, M.D., his psychiatrist, as sole beneficiary.

While his plane sent a small explosion of light into the sky above Newfoundland—a supernova to a passing dove, she thought—she had been in bed with Tom, on top, banging away at him, waves of orgasm passing from her thighs to her brain and back again, blinding her, making her wish she would never have to look at anything in this world again. Still, even in memory, even while that warm ocean had come roaring through her body, the thought of having to talk with Tom afterward—of having to act as if she cared for him more than she did—wearied her.

So now that you can do anything you want, what is it you want to do?

She laughed. I'm not sure, Simon. Let's wait and see.

Sure, he said. I'm good at waiting. Where I am now, I can be patient in a way I wasn't able to be before. It's the best kind of patient to be.

Simon had asked her often about her childhood. It wasn't fair, he would protest, that she knew all about him and he knew nothing about her! Why was she hiding from him? If you tell me all about yourself, he said, I promise I won't criticize you or make fun of you the way you do to me.

I grew up poor, Simon. I was an only child. My father was a handsome man who loved to drink and who would, in my presence, sometimes beat my mother. Mostly, though, he'd fall down drunk and beg her forgiveness. My mother worked as a cleaning woman at St. Anthony's Hospital in Newark. My father died of a heart attack when I was eleven and he was thirty-seven. It happened on a trolley car, though for years I told friends—boyfriends especially—that he'd died in the saddle. I made up stories about him. In high school, he

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was in love with a beautiful girl who later became a movie star. Stopping over in Newark on her way to New York—the weekend of their twentieth high school reunion—she called him. In her luggage, in addition to her lavish wardrobe, she carried with her, always, her own powder-blue satin sheets.

So now that you know that, what do you know?

Simon looked away, as if ashamed to have drawn such information from her—as if frightened, Jane sensed, that she would abandon him because she had told him about herself.

The difference, she thought, answering her own question. The difference between what I was and what I am. Between outside and inside. Between then and now. Well. If Simon could not know her—know her life—he could do the next best thing: he could, from the grave, alter it.

The aspirins were taking effect. Jane watched her headache lift, the fumes curling from her hair, rising to the ceiling. She remembered, as a child, buying tubes of magic smoke, rubbing the sticky substance between her fingertips, watching the feathered plumes lift off. In the mist below the ceiling, Simon coalesced, drifted down. He sat next to her.

Money was the one thing my mother talked to me about freely, Simon. Money was the matter of her lullabies. My mother taught me how to budget, explained on a daily basis how she managed the bills, the shopping, the rent. When she wrote a check, I sealed the envelope. When she held up two cans of beans in the grocery, I chose the less expensive one. If I had not existed, she would surely have moved to the shore—to Asbury Park, where her sister Regina had found a husband, an accountant, who bought her a house of her own and who treated her like a lady. But her sister would not let her move in while my mother had a child with her.

The phone rang and Tom's voice came through the answering machine. He had been in touch with his lawyer, Emlyn Schiff, who was expecting her call. Tom had two questions for her: If Simon wanted her to have all the money, why did he send a copy of the policy to his parents? And if she was so rich, why wasn't she smart—smart enough to fall madly in love with him?

Jane smiled. She had known Tom for nearly a year, had seen him or spoken with him almost every day for the previous four months. He was handsome, intelligent, generous. He was marketing director for a large New York publishing house, had been a senior editor before that. He had a wonderful sense of humor. He loved her. She doubted neither his constancy nor his wit. So what kept her from returning his love, from feeling free to say, All right—you're it. She was splendid, as with Simon, at taking care of others—at helping them learn to take care of themselves, to know themselves. But when somebody else—Tom—wanted to care for her....

She closed her eyes and, with Simon, silently recited the opening lines of Auden's poem in memory of Yeats:

*He disappeared in the dead of winter*
*The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted....*

Simon had brought copies of his own poems to her office, had sometimes inserted into their conversations snatches from the poems of others and then, afterwards, asked if she noticed the difference: which words were his, which belonged to Yeats or Auden, to Thomas, Jeffers, cummings, Dickinson, Hopkins, Donne, or Blake. Most of the time—though she did not let on—she could have answered, could have passed Simon's tests.

Yet, as with his parents, Simon had his small victory with her too. For she could neither return his last gift nor talk with him about it. She knew all about accepting and not accepting gifts from patients. Well. If she was entitled to the money, he'd been entitled to the pleasure—had it been his—of giving it to her, of letting his parents know he had.

She wondered, though: now that she could have virtually anything she wanted whenever she wanted it, would she be less horny? She felt almost giddy, finding the question there. Would being free financially enable her to be more patient with herself sexually? What Tom didn't know about her adventures during the past year—brief, delightful flings, usually at out-of-town professional meetings—surely didn't hurt him, and surely, too, she had been clear about her own sense of their relationship, about the freedom she desired for herself and allowed for him. She understood her own needs and patterns well enough. When the sex came first—and early—what need was there for trust? The sex *represented* intimacy. Genuine trust was something that, by definition, came only with time—something that, as she knew better than most, was built and sustained slowly.

Trust was not infatuation and infatuation was not love and love was not sex and sex was not love and love was not infatuation and infatuation was not trust.

Yes? Tell me more.

To know something in the mind is not to feel it in the heart, and to feel it in the heart is not necessarily to know it in the life.

You're confused, aren't you?

Yes, Simon. I'm confused, if mildly.

I can tell from how general you're being about yourself—the words you're using—about trust and money and love. Simon paused, leaned forward. When he spoke again, his voice was hers: would you like to talk about it?

She laughed. You're wonderful, Simon. You really are.

I always thought it was so.

That you were wonderful?

No. That money was at least as wonderful and confusing as sex. So what do *you* think?

Jane sighed. What I think is that I want to be loved—most of all, endlessly—by a handsome, strong, attractive man, and yet....

Yes?

I feel ashamed of my desire at the same time that I fear it will never be fulfilled. Such an ordinary sentiment, alas.

I disagree.

She dressed for work. She thought of her day: an hour's drive out to the hospital on Long Island for a staff meeting, then back to the city for four hours of individual therapy at her Manhattan office. Jane wanted to get to the poems before Simon's parents did. She worried that if his parents found the poems he had written expressly for her, they might, in their rage, destroy them. Some of the poems, she thought, were publishable—Simon had been too terrified of rejection to send them out—and so she would ask Tom to look at them, to give her his opinion. If the poems were neither publishable nor good, she wanted, still, to be able to use them in her own work, for a paper she was preparing on dissociative mechanisms in posttraumatic stress disorders.

Through the static of her answering machine, Simon's father returned. He had checked at the hospital, at her office. If she insisted on avoiding him, he would be forced to take actions they might both regret.

Simon had once talked of composing a poem made up solely of messages from people's answering machines. His own "Hic and Ille," he said, about a convention at the World Trade Center, where answering machines gathered in the darkness of an auditorium to exchange greetings and messages.

Simon's father, unable to provoke a reaction from Jane, was now railing against her—about how she had taken advantage of Simon's good nature, of his vulnerability. "He may have been out of his mind—which is why your case won't hold up in court for a minute—but he's still our son," Mr. Pearlstein declared. "There's a difference."

Jane raised her glass to Mr. Pearlstein's voice. Together, she and Simon watched the bile travel upward to Mr. Pearlstein's mouth, out and into the receiver, through the wires, down into the walls of his apartment building. It rolled below the city's streets, gathering speed, tumbling toward her apartment. The underground cable was slick and sticky. Like what? Jane smiled, made an incision in the sidewalk, lifted the cable—a gleaming, slippery large intestine—unfurled it, stretched it to its full length so that the liquid rage within could flow more easily, so that she could see where, at each end, to slice the tube.

Simon passed the scalpel to her, complimented her on how deft she was. He said he would trust her to remove his brain, to cut out the sections of it that made him ill. He bent over the white sheet, sniffed it so he could determine which sections were rotting. He had read about Phineas Gage, he said. Phineas Gage was a railroad crew chief through whose brain, in 1845, a three-foot-seven-inch-long, 1.25-inch-diameter iron rod, weighing 13.5 pounds—dynamited into his skull—had passed. Phineas and others who suffered penetrating bifrontal brain injuries often regained full physical independence. Their characters and personalities, however, suffered major disorders.

Their brains survived, Simon said, but their minds didn't. How come?

Jane cupped Simon's brain in her hands, set it on top of the water, watched it bob, dip, drop downward. She imagined it becoming part of the coral reef, the reef turning to flesh, throbbing, Simon waking from sleep, rising from the bottom of the sea, grinning.

The question remained: what would she do with all the money?

She could pay back her medical school debts, look for a larger apartment in a safer neighborhood, redecorate her office, get her mother into a better nursing home, buy books, clothing, records, antique jewelry, eat elegantly in expensive restaurants, take long, luxurious vacations....

But where would she go, and with whom?

With me.

Why you?

Because I'm paying for the trip.

You're dead, Simon.

Says who?

She spoke with the building's superintendent on West 74th Street, told him she wanted to see Simon's apartment, to gather some items for a memorial service. The superintendent—a young Puerto Rican with the jaundiced, creased face of a man twice his age—stared at her ankles, her breasts. He lifted his T-shirt, scratched a scar that ran in a jagged diagonal across his stomach, said that he couldn't do it. He had orders.

I'm Simon's sister, she said.

He shrugged.

She handed him a fifty dollar bill. This is for all you did to make Simon comfortable. He liked living here.

It's your choice, lady. Only I never gave you nothing. If you want a key, I might arrange it.

She gave him a second fifty dollar bill. He gave her the key. Money is a wonderful thing, she said to him.

Better than sex, he said, articulating, to her surprise, the very words that were in her mind.

She unlocked the door, closed her eyes, imagined that she was entering a commercial for California wine. A handsome executive, in midnight-blue tuxedo, stood at the window, gazing out at the city. The slow movement of Bach's Second Violin Concerto floated toward her in crystalline waves. The carpeting was linen-white, the furniture and draperies shades of ivory, mauve, lavender, ruby. Jane blinked. A plush leather couch, armrests of gleaming chrome, curved under billowing drapes at the far end of the long room.

She moved forward, across a handsome oriental rug. Simon had left his small apartment in order. There was an oak buffet, a glass coffee table with three geodes on it, a couch upholstered in navy blue corduroy. On the walls were prints: Chagall, Klee, O'Keeffe. A framed poem, inscribed to Simon from Seamus Heaney, hung on the wall beside the couch. Jane looked into the narrow kitchen, saw the chef's wrought-iron pot rack above the butcher block island, noted the microwave oven, the blender, the espresso machine. The white countertops glistened.

Beyond the sink and refrigerator, next to a window that led to the fire escape, there was an old mahogany telephone bench, where, as in a love seat, you sat to make and receive calls. She imagined Simon's parents telephoning the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* to come and photograph the apartment, the *Times* running a sidebar featuring one of Simon's poems. In death, as never in life, he might, with enough luck and hype, join some of those poets whose reputations, he argued, had been inflated by suicide: Plath, Berryman, Sexton, Jarrell.

She moved to the bedroom, imagined that she was walking across the sleeping bodies of hundreds of Angora cats. Simon's desk, a wide rectangle of golden oak, was at the far end of the room. The bed itself, between her and the desk, was, to her surprise, queen-sized, covered with a quilt, the quilt stained in deep parallel bands of purple, vermillion, cobalt blue. She moved to the desk.

A velvet-encased box—IN MEMORY OF JANE FOGARTY inscribed upon its cover—waited dead center, an electronic typewriter to its left, two volumes to its right: *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, The Collected Poems of W. H. Auden.* She sat in Simon's chair, untied the lacing of the case, looked at the title page. Once, during her junior year abroad, she recalled, she had pretended to be wealthy, had sat for two luxurious hours in a fancy London art gallery, opening such boxes, going through Flemish engravings.

She looked beyond the desk, to the fire escapes on the backs of facing buildings. She closed her eyes, thought of Dutch landscapes, of low horizons and wide vistas, saw the land slip downward so that there was nothing in the frame but sky. She could enter that sky with Simon, were he to trust her enough. If he could have closed his eyes and let himself fall into the white space, believing that she would never let him fall all the way—if he could have learned fully to depend on her until he could depend upon himself....

"We knew you'd be here."

She turned.

"That's her, officer. Jane Fogarty—the lady we told you about."

"She told me she was his sister and that he gave her the key. I don't know nothing else."

Simon's father held up a camera, took her photograph.

The police officer moved forward, spoke to her about her rights, about trespassing, about pressing charges. Jane saw other people standing in the doorway, to either side of Mr. and Mrs. Pearlstein, assumed they were Simon's older brothers and sisters. She saw children. Simon's nieces and nephews?

"And I'm Samuel Axelrod, Dr. Fogarty—Mr. and Mrs. Pearlstein's attorney."

"I'm sorry, darling," Mrs. Pearlstein said. Mrs. Pearlstein touched the hem of her skirt, turned in a half circle, like a young girl. She touched the quilt. There were tears in her eyes. "Where did he get the money?"

"You've never been here before, have you?" Jane said.

"Don't answer her," Simon's father said.

"It's like magic, being here," Mrs. Pearlstein said. "That I should live to see the day my son had an apartment like this. When he was a boy he always helped me clean. He scrubbed the kitchen floor. One time he scrubbed the oriental rug and I yelled at him because it was so hard to get the Ajax out. He asked for the rug when he moved out of the hospital."

The police officer had his pad in hand. Jane stared at the black leather holster that held his revolver, at the handcuffs that dangled from his belt. The children were laughing at her. She counted: there were nine of them. She wanted to tell them about the note Simon sent, with the policy—how he had mistyped a word, writing that he had *attacked* the policy to the note when he meant *attached.*

"I'm sorry," she said. "I'm very sorry. I liked Simon."

"I'll bet you did," Mr. Pearlstein said. "I've read articles about what you people do with your patients—"

"Shush," Mrs. Pearlstein said. "She's a nice young woman. She helped Simon. Look around to see the proof. He needed help and she was there."

"With her hand out."

"Max is too upset to notice anything except revenge," Mrs. Pearlstein said to Jane. "The first time Simon got into bad trouble—when he had spiders crawling over him and tried to kill his brother—Max was the one who calmed him down, got him to go to the hospital before he hurt anybody. Sometimes I think Max loved

him more than I did."

"I won't argue with you, Norma," Mr. Pearlstein said. "It's not the time."

"How?" Simon's mother asked. "How did he do all this?"

"I gave him money on the side."

Mrs. Pearlstein kissed her husband. "I'm sorry I yelled at you when we were short on cash. I love you."

"From poetry he would never have made a living. I checked."

Jane smiled.

"I don't need your condescending looks, young lady. You know when my son changed? When he stopped taking the pills you gave him. Because they were poison. If it was up to you people, you would have stuck a funnel in his mouth like for a goose and poured pills down him forever." Mr. Pearlstein nodded to the officer. "Officer, do your duty."

Jane almost laughed, even as the officer moved forward.

"Hi!"

Everybody turned toward the living room.

"I'm Tom Hoffman, a friend of Dr. Fogarty. And this is our lawyer, Emlyn Schiff." Tom moved through the room as if he were a politician working a crowd.

Emlyn Schiff and Samuel Axelrod shook hands. Jane kissed Tom on the cheek. "My hero," Jane whispered.

"She's sick," Mr. Pearlstein said. "Didn't I tell you? Our son—her patient—is dead, and in his bedroom she makes jokes."

Jane started forward. The police officer put up his hand, as if at a school crossing. Emlyn Schiff whispered to Samuel Axelrod. Samuel Axelrod whispered to Mr. Pearlstein.

"Okay. Let her go for now," Mr. Pearlstein said. "But we haven't finished, believe me—not by a long shot."

Jane tied the case, showed the officer that it had her name on it.

Tom was asleep. Jane slipped into his T-shirt, sat at her desk, sipped wine, began reading through Simon's poems. Tom had saved the day and had done so, it seemed, simply because he was worried about what she might be getting into. He wished, he said, she would act as impulsively and instinctively toward him as she did toward her patients. Though she had laughed with Tom about the scene—how crazy, pathetic, and comic it was—she felt now as if it were all a dream. She smiled. Of course. It *was* a dream—Simon's dream come true—and she was living in it.

"What are you reading?"

"His poems."

"May I?"

He kissed her neck, and she reached up, stroked his cheek, his hair. He lifted a page.

*In the prison of his days*
*Teach the free man how to praise.*

"That's good," Tom said. "He had a gift, didn't he?"

"That's Auden," she said. "Not Simon. Here's Simon: *In the prism of his daze / Teach the free man how to craze.* Simon did that sometimes, to see if—"

She broke off, saw again the dazed expression on Mrs. Pearlstein's face.

"I like you, Tom. I like you a lot." She turned and rubbed her forehead against his stomach, wanting to burrow into him as far as she could. "I'm trying. Really."

"I know. You're very trying."

She stood, pushed him out of the way. "Don't make jokes," she snapped.

Jane looked around the table: five doctors, three aides, two social workers, three nurses. Only one of the doctors—Feinstein, fast asleep to her left—could speak English with any fluency. Two of the aides routinely beat up their patients. One of the nurses, she knew, was on morphine. Another drank heavily....

She had called her travel agent in the morning, had inquired about flights, cruises, tour packages.

What does an Irishman do on his vacation?

He sits on somebody else's stoop.

She saw her mother's mouth, heard her mother howling with laughter. Her mother's head was way back, her mouth so enormous Jane imagined it could catch whole fish, the fish pouring down from barrels, the barrels at the edge of the tenement's roof. She and Simon were children, on the roof, tipping the barrels over, raining the pickled water down on the grown-ups. Her mother laughed harder, repeating her old jokes—about the stoop, about the priest and the chorus girl—and when her mother stopped, to get her breath, Jane heard Schiff's voice, advising her to settle out of court, fifty-fifty. Yes, they probably could prove that Simon was in his right mind when he made out the will. But that didn't matter: one did not have to be mentally stable to purchase life insurance. Yes, he would take her case, and yes, he was confident they would, in the end, prevail. But the end might be a long way off. Axelrod was very smart and very persistent. He would delay, appeal, drag the case through the courts interminably. He would claim undue influence, would try to prove that Simon had been particularly susceptible to Jane's charms. The Pearlsteins would sue the hospital, would use the newspapers, would move for a change of venue due to the publicity, would get the insurance money put into escrow on suspicion of fraud. Jane would be attacked publicly, professionally, personally. The hospital might think itself within its rights to suspend her temporarily....

*Mental Patient Leaves Fortune to Female Shrink.*

*Bereaved Family Claims Alienation of Affections.* She thought of Simon's Crazy Jane poems, considered supplying him with new titles: Crazy Jane at a Staff Meeting, Crazy Jane and the Pearlsteins. Men come, men go, she recited to herself: all things remain in God. And what, Schiff assured her Axelrod would ask, had she *really* been doing in Simon's apartment? Had she been there before? How much would it cost, after all, to get the janitor to testify that she often spent the night there?

I had wild Simon for a lover, she mused, though, like a road that men pass over, my body makes no moan but sings on: all things remain in escrow.

Who paid for the apartment? Who encouraged him to fly to Ireland? Why did he write love poems to his psychiatrist?

Across from her, Dr. Kandrak was whispering to Dr. Ramanujian. She didn't know if the language they used was Pakistani, Indian, or a regional dialect.

How, Simon had asked, could doctors help crazy people get well when they couldn't even talk with them in the same language? Wouldn't Dr. Fogarty agree that communication was a moderately important part of a true healing process?

With great gentleness, she had asked why he asked her about the doctors of other patients.

Because I'm afraid to talk to you, to tell you what I feel.

Yes. But try, Simon. Try if you can.

I am trying, he said. Can't you tell? Why don't you trust me when I tell you I'm afraid? Why do you always want to criticize me?

Do you really think that?

Yes. No. But I think you like me. You're very beautiful when you smile. Sometimes.

Sometimes.

Sometimes I think you like me. You're always beautiful.

I like you, Simon. I like you very much. But try not to be afraid of telling me what you feel.

You're not out to get me then?

What do you think?

No. But—

But what?

But I feel you are. I'm sorry.

She had seen the tears come to his eyes then, noticed the way he turned his wrists, as if he were shaking down a batch of silver bracelets. She thought of his bones, on a beach, bleached and hollow like the bones of gulls. Had Simon reached for her hand—she suspected he wanted to, though she was not sure he knew it—she would have given it. Instead, he made a fist, chose that moment to tell her he was going to take out the insurance policy before his trip.

I know it's a nutty idea, he said, but you said not to hide anything so I'm telling you what I was thinking of doing if I ever get well enough to be on my own. I want to go to England and Ireland, to visit their homes. I want to be one upon whom nothing is lost. I want to meet them at close of day. But I don't know if I can.

Can what?

Can go to Ireland and take out an insurance policy in your name. So what do *you* think?

About what?

About how you'll feel if I die, damn it! Let's say I get well enough to really go—let us go then, you and I, right?—and I'm not etherized on anything other than those dolphin-torn seas and far from dives on 52nd Street and you think: if I hadn't helped him get well, then he wouldn't ever have made the trip and he would still be alive.

Yes?

I want both. I want both lives. I want all the lives I can have! I want *everything*!

Good.

Good?

The others were standing, gathering papers. Dr. Feinstein lit a cigar, whispered to her that he was the Red Auerbach of the state mental health system. "I think we're going to win," he said, his Viennese accent thick. Feinstein had known Freud, Rank, Abraham, Jones, Ferenczi. He claimed to have been analyzed by Eitengon. Eitengon had not, of course, worked for the KGB, as was now claimed, though who knew, despite his small stature and plain looks, what might have passed between him and the actress Plevitskaya. . . .

"Win?"

"When he believes the basketball game is, as you say, in the bag, he lights up a cigar."

"Mimesis then," Jane said. "Now I understand: you and Auerbach."

Feinstein touched her hand, lovingly. "Ah, Jane, why are you here?"

"And you?"

"A different life. I've already been everywhere else, yes?"

She walked across the hospital lawn, thought of lying down, of blowing on the young spring grass as if it were the hair along Tom's forearm.

Don't!

Don't what?

Don't betray me so soon when I'm scarce in the grave. Doesn't anyone believe in grief anymore? I saw you last night, the things you did with him. You never touched my arm with your breath—never made the soft hairs sway, never let me lie emptied of my poetry.

Have a good trip, Simon.

That's *all*? Have a good trip? I pour my heart out to you and you won't even tell me how you feel about it? I mean, what if something goes wrong? What if the IRA bombs the pub I'm in?

You yourself told me they always telephone the pubs first, as warning.

But the phones never work in Irish pubs! That's why—

Jane laughed. Oh Simon—you're wonderful!

I am?

She did not reply.

But listen to me. What if it happens? What if they kidnap me? What if the plane blows up before the pub does? What if the trip is a mistake? What if my *life* is a mistake?

We'll talk about it when you return.

We'll-talk-about-it-when-you-return, he mimicked. Maybe you're the one who's making the mistake. Maybe it's too soon. Maybe I should be back in the hospital. Maybe I shouldn't have trusted you with my life. Goddamn it—stop smiling and say something—your smile's driving me crazy! You're just so damned beautiful and I'm just so damned scared, can't you understand? Maybe if you were plain, this would be easier.

Have a wonderful trip.

Sure.

I'll miss you, Simon.

He went to the door, opened it, turned.

Oh, he said quietly.

It was the last time she would ever see him. For her, she thought, it was his last afternoon as himself. He started to apologize for having become angry with her, but stopped himself. God! he said. I'm really doing it.

On the Long Island Expressway, traffic hardly moved. Jane passed three separate accidents, thought of getting off the Expressway in order to telephone in that she would be late. But whom would she telephone? She had no secretary. In Manhattan, her patients would arrive at a locked door. Damn! She prided herself on always being on time. She agreed with Auden that tardiness—not lust—should be one of the seven deadly sins. Her patients had to be able to trust her fully, to know that she was, for them, no matter the world's vagaries, dependable—that her commitment was unconditional.

Her engine coughed, died. She turned the key in the ignition; it ground noisily, metal on metal. The gas gauge showed empty. She got out of her car, slid sideways along the door, took a deep breath. It had occurred to her on the way to work several hours earlier to stop for gas, but she had forgotten to do so. She relaxed, made the association: she had forgotten because at that moment—knowing she might run dry—she had, instead, begun thinking of herself as the heroine in a ghost story, and she had begun doing that because the possibility of running dry had led her to think of Simon's statement about being one upon whom nothing was lost. She had full recall of such trains of association, prided herself—the great dividend from her analysis—on being able to relax enough to trace any series of thoughts or feelings to their source.

Lying in Tom's arms the night before, she had talked with him about how surprised she was not to be happier about her windfall. With some hesitancy she told him of her imaginary dialogues with Simon, of how uneasy they made her. Survivor guilt? Surely it was more complicated than that, yet she couldn't get a handle on it—on why she felt so unsettled. Tom lifted her hair, ran his tongue along her neck, told her he was encouraged to learn that she did, in fact, have an active fantasy life. "I think it's great that you and Simon are still having sessions. Even if there are no third-party payments," he said. "It's what saves us. The lack of imagination, as you've said before, *is* directly connected to the instinct for cruelty." She said nothing. "If we didn't imagine lives other than the one we have," he went on, "we'd die." He touched her gently. "Can't you see that yet?"

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*When the sex came first—and early—what need was there for trust? The sex represented intimacy. Genuine trust was something that, by definition, came only with time.*

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She turned toward him then, unable to speak, but feeling an overwhelming tenderness for him. She kissed his collarbone, licked his chest, bit at his nipples, then suckled there. When he sighed with pleasure, she felt happy. "What I love about you, since you asked," he said then, "why I feel each time we meet that I'm meeting you for the first time, all over again, as it were, is that, of all people, you seem the last to know the obvious about yourself: about your dreams, about how they work to keep *you* alive. Sometimes you seem hardly to know you have an imagination."

Simon, she sensed from the beginning, like others she treated, had the capacity to get well—to cure himself with her help—precisely because he had the ability and willingness to imagine lives he never had, to have lives he never imagined. People who loved stories, she believed—who could think of their lives *as* stories—could learn to trust, no matter their childhoods, no matter the psychic and emotional devastation visited upon them.

She had been happy, then, in the morning, thinking of Simon. She had been happy thinking of the small miracle of his life, of what he had, finally, by his act—no matter his death—done. He had done something that was truly him. What followed because of it—the drama she and his family were now embroiled in—was nothing more or less than a story that he had begun and that they would finish.

Driving to work along the Expressway she had let herself imagine, word by word, how she might, for Simon, have summarized that story: A young woman who has never married or fallen deeply in love inherits a large sum of money due to the death of a young male patient of hers. The patient, on the point of setting out for the Continent, there to visit the homes of the poets he loves, has been dependent upon the woman and, cured by her of his profound malaise, has rewarded himself with the gift of this adventure. He has decided, after all, to live. Yet he dies, and the woman, suddenly wealthy, is now visited not only by the ghost of this young man, but, to her surprise, by ghosts from her own past that, for all her knowledge and dreams, she has never before acknowledged. Realizing that she has been giving to others what she herself was never given—trust, love, and the will to risk all for life itself, with whatever pain and loss this risk may carry—what does she now do? Perhaps she sets forth for the Continent, to take up the very journey her young man has not taken. If so, what does she discover?

That she is out of gas.

Simon laughed.

Jane laughed with him and pulled herself up onto the hood of her car. She sat there, enjoying the warmth of the metal against her thighs. Well, this *is* a gas, isn't it, Simon?

It's lovely seeing you smile this way. I never saw you look so happy before. I never saw you let yourself get out of control.

Jane's car was stalled in the middle of three lanes. The heat rising from the engine was hotter than she had at first realized, and she wondered if it would, through her thin cotton skirt, burn her. The sun shone brightly on her even as she felt the rain hit her face.

It's only a sun-shower, she said to Simon. It'll be gone soon.

And then what?

Then I'll call Tom and tell him I love him. I'd like to try that on for a while—see if it takes.

And then?

Then I'll call Emlyn and tell him not to settle—that I'll never settle. I want it all, Simon. The whole half-million.

The rain washed her hair onto her face. Her blouse and skirt stuck to her skin, and she imagined peeling the cloth away, wrapping herself in warm towels. The water ran crazily, in narrow rivers, over her ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, down her neck, along her back, into her shoes. She heard horns, saw blurred faces staring at her from behind windshields. She thought she could hear the pleasant click and swish of wipers, and she had no desire to do anything but sit on her car's hood and let the rain pour down upon her while she wondered if Simon could actually see her, while she wondered if she would ever be able to give herself—to the child within her—what she had given so well to him.

What was that?

Her mouth was open now, as wide as it could go, so that her jaw ached with pleasure, and the sound that rose from deep inside her—as if fueled by the engine's brutal fire, through cylinders, valves, cast iron, and tempered steel; through thighs, stomach, chest, and throat—was, she knew, like nothing else but her mother's drunken howling. With the years, her mother had come to drink at least as much as her father had. As her mother had comforted her father, so she had come to comfort and care for her mother. But knowing that, what did she know? Their drinking was not them, after all; addiction did not explain their lives—it merely explained them away. Then was not now. To discover what it was that kept her from loving a man such as Tom, that kept her from fully enjoying her legacy from Simon—to accomplish such things she would have to do more than relive the ordinary pain that had come with loving her mother and father. She would have to do more than she felt capable of.

She tipped her head back so that it rested against the windshield. The rain, like sorrow itself, would wash over her and pass, and she would still be there. It might wear her and use her, but she could wear it and use it in return; for it was blind, whereas she after a manner saw. She smiled. Do you know who said that?

Sounds like one of the James boys, Simon said. Very Irish.

She was surprised that he knew, but then, as he noted, he was now everlastingly what he had previously been only for a time: one upon whom nothing would ever be lost. She wanted to talk with him at length—at leisure—but before she could do that, she had to let the sound inside her out, and she was afraid she could not. She was afraid that, no matter how much she let go, more would be there—that it would keep boiling up inside her forever. Still, she knew that she had to begin, and so she let it ride through her and out—let it all loose—and she watched it rise through the falling rain until it reached into the heavens and tore through, like dynamite blasting open enormous slabs of concrete.

Then, as suddenly as the rain had begun, it stopped. □

Book Review

# An Eye Grows in Brooklyn

*Marcie Hershman*

*Leaving Brooklyn* by Lynne Sharon Schwartz. Houghton Mifflin, 1989, 146 pp.

"Next year in Jerusalem," we vow at our Seders, even though we expect to be in the same dining room the next spring. Similarly, we might declare that, a while back, we left Brooklyn. Again, few of us may ever have lived there. But, in literary terms, we understand. Leaving Brooklyn has been something American Jews have done in fiction since our ancestors first struggled to get there.

Lynne Sharon Schwartz's novel takes on two traditions, that of coming-of-age fiction and that of leaving Brooklyn. She succeeds in spinning both conventions around until the storyteller's own past blurs with the city's familiar signposts. And when we try to grab hold of the narrator—this supposed nice Jewish girl, this apparently conventional author—to steady ourselves in what should be a comfortable and comforting landscape, she causes us to lose our grip. Was it a joke, some sleight of hand? We couldn't quite see. But we're set loose and wandering again; and now, it feels familiar.

In this tantalizing memoir-as-novel, Schwartz stares over her shoulder at the problems of coming into being, which are always right before us. It's a neat postmodern trick, this doubling of mirrors and images. To accomplish it, Schwartz creates an adult writer/narrator who is trying to see herself again as a girl living through a crucial time in her life. This is her fifteenth year, just after World War II, when she, Audrey, gets and rejects "the lens."

Or, as the book begins: "This is the story of an eye, and how it came into its own." An *eye*? Doesn't she mean an *I*? Yes, that too.

"Between the moment of my birth," continues Audrey, "and [my mother's] next inspection I suffered an injury to my right eye. How it occurred is a mystery. Some blunder made in handling was all she would murmur—drops, doctors, nurses, vagueness: 'These things happen.'"

The result is that Audrey moves through the world with one "good" eye/I and the other, of course, "wandering." As a youngster, she wants to approach life the way people around her seem to, but she cannot. First, one of her eyes "escapes to the private darkness beneath the lid . . . [and] much of the time no one would know about its little trip." And second, "the world through my right eye [was] a tenuous place . . . where a piece of face or the leg of a table or frame of a window might at any moment break off and drift away—a tenuousness . . . unknown to those with common binary vision who saw the world of a piece."

Audrey's "double vision" makes her different, right from the start. Says the adult of the youngster:

> Telling about her is an act of self-sabotage. [But] before she vanishes altogether from memory—for now memory threatens to be more invention than recall—I want to make her transparent. I want to expose the mystery of change and recall, peel her story off her the way some people can peel an orange, in one exquisite unbroken spiral.

The Brooklyn of this fifteen-year-old is past its own coming of age; it's no longer immigrant, which was an earlier incarnation, but largely middle-class. In the first months after the war's end, there are some immigrants, but they stay on the periphery of the community's vision. They are the Jews who outfoxed and outlived the Nazis. The narrator tells us how she felt seeing the arm of a new classmate, bared in springtime; on it, tattooed two-and-a-half inches above the wrist, was a many-digited number. "I felt a twinge of envy between my ribs and was immediately ashamed and horrified. . . . But I didn't covet the other girl's suffering, only her knowledge; I wished it were possible to have the one without the other."

Audrey is hungry for all kinds of knowledge, but she's living in a place that immigrants and the children of immigrants built in order to shield their children from the kind of carnage and deprivation undergone by the people with numbers on their arms. Brooklyn is as much a "state of mind" as a geographical place, a "locus of customs and mythologies" where "being settled" is the ultimate virtue. Activities are planned solely for enjoyment and for the ease of their repetition. Pinochle games every Wednesday for the men; bridge games in a different room, but on the same night, for the women; coffee and Danish later for both sexes. Everything neat; everyone in their place.

If Audrey is curious about a larger world where "a window might at any moment break off and drift away," she'll have to find answers from the few ways available to her. One is the apparently "good" public eye of television, the other the "bad" secret journey of sexuality.

"We were among the last on our block to succumb," admits the narrator about TV. But once they did, they lived, as all Brooklyn did, "like cave families who sat around sighing in the dark until the accidental discovery of fire." From the television came

> the image of the man my father called "the pig," in fuzzy black and white on the evening news, marbly eyes darting, shoulders lunging, spit gathering at the

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corners of his mouth, while my father, stretched out on the red couch, ground his teeth audibly, gnawed on his cigar, and said, "Somebody's going to get that bastard one of these days."

The "bastard" is Joe McCarthy. Audrey assumes he's only "a fat face on a flat screen," far removed from her protected life. But the implicit message he conveys—that power is the ability to exploit and even destroy other people for your own purposes—charges many of the seemingly naive interactions in the story with a predatory energy. It disturbs the calm surface of relationships that we first expect simply to laugh with and savor, as we certainly laugh when the narrator continues her TV report:

> "*Schmuck*," my father taunted the television screen. "Communists! Communists! You wouldn't know a communist if he came and sat on your goddamn head." . . .
>
> "Communism," my father shouted at the screen, "is a system of economic organization of goods and services! Communism is not a moral flaw!"
>
> "Shush, for God's sakes!" warned my mother. "The walls are thin. They can hear you on East New York Avenue."
>
> "Who!" He turned on her, ready to pounce. "Who'll hear me? Rosenbloom? Schneider?" Our next door neighbors. "They're illiterate anyway. Let them hear!"

McCarthy's is only one of many personal crusades that disturb the apparently stable surface of things. Among the local authorities is Miss Schechter, Audrey's geometry teacher. Miss Schechter holds the passionate conviction that it is wrong for girls of thirteen to wear bras before "in her judgment" they are necessary. "Her Savonarola eyes scanned the row of seats, scrutinizing bosoms—it was an era of tight chartreuse and fuchsia sweaters—and lit on a daily suspect. Leaving the class with a difficult proof to work on, Miss Schechter marched the girl to the girls' room."

Thinking herself safe, because "braless," Audrey is shocked, as other innocents must have been in more dangerous, life-threatening situations, to hear her name called out loud in the middle of one afternoon. She remains shocked enough, years later, to say, after recalling how she had pulled up her sweater on command, "I wish I were making it up or reporting from hearsay, appropriating the scene to make the narrative more telling. Perhaps I am, I hope I am. Once again, the line blurs. . . ."

*"Schmuck," my father taunted the television screen. "Communists! Communists! You wouldn't know a communist if he sat on your goddamn head. Communism is not a moral flaw!"*

Schwartz is able to hint how "these things happen"—how numbers might get tattooed on pale forearms, how livelihoods could be destroyed in public, how people could be deprived of experience and imagination yet remain secure in their power to exploit others. And she also brilliantly evokes the pathos of Audrey's most disturbing, most outrageous "wandering . . . private" encounter with the eye doctor. He is an authority on vision—or, as Audrey's mother puts it, "a big man."

The big man's office is in Manhattan, the True City within the city. Audrey goes there to be fitted for one of the first experimental contact lenses, which her parents hope will "correct" her "bad" eye; they want her to look—if not see—like other girls in her neighborhood. Audrey doesn't want the lens, but, as a "good" girl from Brooklyn, she acquiesces. Then, during the third checkup, when she's in the examining chair, something unexpected happens. Leaning over her, the eye/I doctor insistently presses her leg, and Audrey, contrary to the order of things, responds:

> As though in a dream, as though it were not a conscious act, I reached out and touched him. I touched him where I knew he would want to be touched. I know that I—she—was not the kind of girl who could do that. . . . Even as I recall it, record it, I suspect I really didn't do such an outrageous thing and memory is falsifying, inventing what I wish I could have done or imagining it from what I have since become capable of doing.

Knowing where she is today, working backward to get at the multilayered truth of her history and identity, the storyteller allows her younger self to physically embrace the eye doctor. She says, "I must let her have it now, do it for her, since it is right that it should have happened. It suits the person I became."

As patient and doctor disrobe, the line between what is accepted and acceptable is subverted. It now seems that Audrey has nowhere to return to. After this visit to the eye doctor, how can she, how can any of us, continue to live in Brooklyn?

She and we remain there by creating fictions, implies the narrator. We keep our private wanderings to ourselves, and, if we're as young, adolescent-like, and selfish as Audrey was at fifteen, we divide our vision as we divide our life. We pledge a high school sorority and pretend to be like the "sisters." We lie—by way of omission—to parents. We visit the doctor, whom we refuse to see is falling blindly in love with us, even though we won't talk to him during our sweaty, escalating physical encounters. We have our weekly tryst with the eye doctor. We believe we can just keep riding the subway back and forth. That's so we can pretend that we're still part of Brooklyn and not part of it at the same time.

The statement "These things happen" clashes with "Did it really happen?" Audrey's "secret journey" out of Brooklyn is not what we have learned to expect from other novels. As readers, we don't know what or how much to believe, so, in postmodern fashion, we confront the physical structure of the text itself. Is this book a novel or a memoir? Is Audrey a stand-in for the author, or is she all artifice? Perhaps, if we knew whether this "wandering" was a doubling of vision (eye) or of self (I), we'd know where *we* stand in relation to "Brooklyn."

Our literary mythology of Brooklyn has been largely seamless or, to twist a pun the way Schwartz might, seemless. After all the years spent in the old

world watching out for dybbuks and deluges, many of us were relieved to see the New World of Brooklyn. We could read the energetic stories of immigrant Jewish families working hard and pulling together in order to make a new beginning in that city where "a tree grows." A bit later, we took in the trials and tribulations of the assimilated young (men, usually); these youngsters were going on to the great city colleges and respectable (literary, usually) careers, and returning to give Mama and Papa *nachas*.

*Leaving Brooklyn* uses the conventions of the postmodern, self-referential text and the tone of feminist self-disclosure. As such, it implies that the other Brooklyn stories may have been superficially true. But as the narrator admits about her past self, "lying wasn't my style. I tended more toward omission." For isn't it so that a "wandering" eye/I finds refuge, as it must, in a private darkness and secret journeys? And all things—somehow—happen.

Through the lens of her seasoned vision, the adult narrator accepts, finally, her own history: "If it wasn't a memory to begin with, it has become one now." By giving ourselves over to Audrey's coming-of-age-and-leaving tale, we accept the blurring of the lines of truth, memory, and fiction that lead to the past.

For a people concerned with the past, perhaps because we're not sure when next we'll be "wandering," Lynne Sharon Schwartz's meditation on the dangers of intentional innocence is infinitely rich. □

Book Review

# The Hazards of Eco-chic

*Robert Gottlieb*

*Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* by Robert C. Paehlke. Yale University Press, 1989, 325 pp.

*Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* by Anna Bramwell. Yale University Press, 1989, 292 pp.

Green is in. George Bush, the one-time champion of environmental deregulation and cost-cutting, holds a dramatic press conference by dirty Boston Harbor and then, early in his administration, decides to make a widely publicized presentation in support of a Clean Air program. Mikhail Gorbachev, in the wake of Chernobyl and an industrial policy that has caused tremendous pollution, encourages a widespread debate over environmental consequences. Similar political interventions take place in Hungary, England (even Margaret Thatcher tries on the lightest shade of green), and West Germany (where *all* the political parties, from the Social Democrats to the Neo-Fascists, attempt to emulate the Green party's original claim to an environmental politics).

In the United States, the conservative commentator Kevin Phillips has recently argued that green issues could well influence the outcome of one of the next presidential elections. His analysis has been confirmed by recent polls suggesting that more people than ever are not only willing to support environmental interventions but are even willing to pay for them. At the same time, alternative grouplets battle fiercely over who has the right to appropriate the green label and, by extension, to define the new "paradigm" of politics arising from it. Social ecologists, bioregionalists, Earth Firsters, and ecofeminists all contend for hegemony over this new politics, but no group has yet developed the kind of powerful organizational presence found in Europe. Meanwhile, mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club (most of which are staff-directed, nationally based organizations) continue to refine the skills of lobbying, litigation, and technical expertise they have been practicing, with little change, since the early 1970s, when environmentalists first extensively spread their influence into the governmental domain.

The current preoccupation with environmental issues is due in part to a shift in political discourse. In the late 1970s, a corporate counteroffensive took shape around resource policy (energy, water, and wilderness lands especially), environmental regulation (clean air, clean water), and industrial activity (workplace safety and consumer product guidelines). Jimmy Carter was a perfect foil for this strategy: his notion of environmentalism as *individual sacrifice* presented an easy target for newly organized corporate lobbies such as the Western Regional Council and the Business Roundtable.

The corporate counterattack focused on negative tradeoffs (job loss, industrial relocation, the high cost of regulation), downplayed the extent and seriousness of environmental pollution (symbolized by the "Good Science" of comparing and thus minimizing risks, which was promoted by Reagan EPA administrator—and later convicted perjurer—Rita Lavelle), and emphasized the importance of renewed industrial production.

For a time, it appeared this corporate counteroffensive had succeeded. Ronald Reagan, with his outlandish views on the environment, was easily elected and reelected. The mainstream environmental groups thought themselves vul-

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nerable and sought ways to adjust to the conservative temper. And Congress, the new focus for environmental lobbying, fretted about deficits and the public's supposed hostility to regulation. This defensive mood culminated during the 1984 presidential campaign when environmental organizations (along with organized labor, civil rights advocates, and feminist groups) were successfully labeled as "special interests," while corporate polluters who led an uneven economic recovery were heralded as promoters of the "national interest."

Then something happened to the political debate. A variety of new local movements emerged to confront such issues as toxics, garbage, and transportation gridlock—the degradation of daily life. More Americans began to desire some form of government intervention. Even the conventional environmental groups, to their surprise, gained both donations and members.

What then is the current environmental agenda of these organizations, and how might it shape contemporary politics? Groups centered in Washington, D.C. debate whether to broaden environmental regulations and cleanup or to devise solutions that creatively use the sphere of the market such as air pollution, "credit," or the sale of water to the highest bidder. William Reilly, Bush's EPA head, who is a longtime advocate of environmental mediation and consensus building, reflects both tendencies in this debate—a little more regulation, a few more incentives.

The new legitimacy and broad-based popularity of ecology has also led to a diversity of attempts to explore its roots, trace its most important ideas, and see how it might influence the current and future political landscape. Canadian political scientist Robert Paehlke's *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* and English writer Anna Bramwell's *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* are among the most recent contributions. Both authors conclude that environmentalism today falls within the center or "soft" left but includes a wide array of countertendencies, both political and apolitical. The authors focus more on environmental ideas than on the social movements that articulate them. As a consequence, they also demonstrate the limits to the current search for a new "paradigm" of politics.

Paehlke suggests that environmentalism has been narrowly focused and antipolitical. He argues that its agenda should include such new issues as reduced military spending and support for human services. He views energy as central, precisely because of its significance for the political economy. But Paehlke fails to link these ideas to any discussion of the social movements that might implement them. And his own analysis of what he sees as an ascendant neoconservatism in North America suggests that his new agenda would have to be tempered by cautious tactics and practical goals. As a result, Paehlke finds himself returning to the kind of self-limiting politics that have long characterized the dominant approach of environmentalists in this country. The tradition has been, for example, to treat pollution issues as externalities, or as limited failures of the market. Environmentalism may indeed, as Paehlke argues, offer the basis for the first new "ideology" since Marxism, but nothing in his book transcends the familiar dilemmas of those who struggle to build "moderate" but "progressive" coalitions in the wake of Reaganism.

*Himmler established experimental organic farms at Dachau to grow organic medicines for the SS.*

While Paehlke's concern is with the present and future, Anna Bramwell seeks to uncover the intellectual roots of today's environmental activists. Her Northern European–centered analysis views "ecology" as a commentary on the land and agriculture in the age of rapid industrialization. The loss of a pristine "Nature," the degradation of the natural environment, and nostalgic yearnings for an agrarian lifestyle are central to her interpretation of English (High Tory) and German nationalist expressions of the ideas of ecology.

Bramwell spends a good deal of time discussing whether German ecology in the 1930s was *generically* Fascist, and her conclusion is ambiguous. On the one hand, she argues, the Nazi vision of ecology had both cultural and economic manifestations—the celebration of the countryside and forests as well as a fascination with "biodynamic" farming. Himmler, for example, established experimental organic farms at Dachau to grow organic medicines for the SS. Yet such interests were not only specific to the German experience (French and Italian Fascists had little to say about the natural environment) but were ultimately undermined by the technocratic and industrial ideas enshrined in the Nazi war machine.

While Bramwell's analysis of the relationship between ecology and nazism reflects her own ambivalence on the subject, she exhibits no such constraint when she turns to the subject of contemporary green politics. She is particularly scathing toward the German Greens, whom she castigates for most unecological behavior—donating part of their public funding to antinuclear groups, Third World causes, and immigrant workers, as opposed to using it for "tree-planting or river cleaning [where] the ecological stance would have been more convincing." Bramwell also has sharp words about attempts to link feminism and ecology. She ridicules German Green fundamentalist Petra Kelly's "account of the sufferings of female secretaries in the EEC [Common Market]," who, Bramwell insists, "notoriously earn a great deal for doing very little." Bramwell recognizes the wide diversity of ideas from "anarchist and protofascist, Marxist and liberal, natural scientist and visionary" that all fit inside the frame of contemporary ecologism. But she remains hostile to the social movements that have used such ideas to respond to the impact of industrial and urban society on daily life.

In the end, who ultimately wins the battle to define the green name and its symbols is less important than how environmental movements translate their ideas into politics. Ecology will remain a "special interest" as long as it confines itself to the question of environment as a separate category of nature, and contamination as a sideshow of industrialization and urbanization. The new green politics will represent the ideological breakthrough promised by Paehlke only when it becomes capable of addressing not just the results of industrial change, but the basic character and structure of that transformation.

This type of critique, which emerged in the 1960s with the expressive but disorganized and ahistorical politics of the New Left, is flourishing today within the nascent multiracial, multiclass, and often female-led social movements dealing with daily life.

These movements represent a kind of epiphany of a new industrial and consumer politics. So-called Not-in-My-Backyard neighborhood groups concerned with toxics (some of whom are affiliated with the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes and the National Toxics Campaign) are one expression of this new form. From challenging where and how toxics are dumped, they have quickly moved to question why certain dangerous products and processes are used in the first place.

By expanding the arena of protest, including linking up with local plant workers who are the first to suffer the effects of hazardous production, these movements are laying part of the groundwork for a new political discourse. Such a discourse, combining "green" ideas with community and workplace empowerment, requires a vision not just of nature less degraded but of society more livable and less hazardous, more peaceful and equitable; where a different set of social relations would coincide with a different conception of the production system itself. □

BOOK REVIEW

# Political Philosophy: Cogito Ergo So What?

*Josh Henkin*

*The Conquest of Politics: Liberal Philosophy in Democratic Times* by Benjamin Barber. Princeton University Press, 1988, 220 pp.

Perhaps no other discipline has undergone as great a revival in recent years as moral philosophy. Countless volumes appear annually focusing on a vast range of ethical dilemmas. From busing to bioengineering, pornography to pedagogy, no issue manages to escape our moral compass—or our philosophers' pens. Indeed, one renowned theorist recently published a four-volume collection, some fourteen hundred pages long, on *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law*; another writes essays on such topics as "Can a Liberal State Support Art?" or "Is Wealth a Value?" Still others set their philosophical sights even higher, attempting to define (and defend) conceptions of equality, liberty, justice. Large tomes have appeared bearing titles such as *A Theory of Justice* and *Social Justice and the Liberal State*. The influence of these books has begun to match their ambition; dog-eared copies now line many a dormitory bookshelf.

Although some of the reasons for the growth of moral philosophy are a function of dynamics internal to the university, others have more to do with the world "out there." Technological advance proceeds apace, providing us with once unimaginable opportunities both to save and to kill millions, even billions, of people. With enough resources to feed the planet, the gap between the possible and the actual is all the more glaring; with enough nuclear energy to destroy it, the decisions we make are more portentous than ever.

Technology, moreover, continually presents us with new and confounding moral dilemmas. Surrogate motherhood, once the cutting-edge ethical issue, already seems passé. Now, in California, there is a court battle over an embryo. The couple, having finally succeeded with in vitro fertilization, is getting divorced. The mother wants to give birth to the child; the father is suing to prevent her. Meanwhile the embryo remains in the freezer.

Another reason for increased interest in moral philosophy has to do with the precarious foundations of morality itself. Ours is an age of immense skepticism, an age in which ethical relativism reigns supreme. Political morality, or the morality of state power, has come under particularly close scrutiny. Two centuries ago political morality meant simply the divine right of kings. Since then, all sorts of moral and political theories—utilitarianism, natural rights, consent, tacit consent—have been promoted by various thinkers only to be shot down by others. In recent years, in particular, the possibility of finding bedrock, of constructing solid moral foundations, has seemed ever more difficult. We live, after all, in an increasingly small and self-conscious world: we are aware, as never before, of cultures different from our own, and therefore of the contingency of our way of life. Morality to some seems like cultural hegemony to others.

*From busing to bioengineering, pornography to pedagogy, no issue escapes our moral compass.*

It is in response to these developments that a growing number of scholars have begun to focus on moral questions, and on the nature of morality itself. Among the more interesting of these thinkers are philosophers such as John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Bruce

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Ackerman. All three attempt to lay out theories of justice that overcome ethical relativism; these theorists are "foundationalists" who try to find a neutral moral base, an Archimedean point, a perspective beyond perspective.

Benjamin Barber, writing in *The Conquest of Politics,* argues that these foundationalists, and others like them, are committed more to "philosophy" than to political reality. So concerned are they with abstract truth that they end up spinning theories that are intellectually impressive but politically irrelevant. What's more, Barber claims, these thinkers are are part of a larger problem: the general "conquest of politics by hubristic philosophy." In other words, as political philosophy has developed, the adjective has been devoured by the noun.

This, Barber contends, is a dangerous development. Dogmatic and absolutist principles don't help the political decision maker. They only obfuscate matters, since today's political problems are too complex to admit easy solutions. In short, Barber argues, politics is best tackled by engaged citizens acting in concert, not by detached philosophers in ivy-coated buildings.

Rawls and Nozick, in particular, incur Barber's wrath. In *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls argues that the appropriate "principles of justice" would be chosen by men and women existing in a hypothetical "original position." In the original position, people operate under a "veil of ignorance," unaware of their particular circumstances in life. They realize that they have interests and desires, but, stripped of their particularity, they do not know what their *specific* interests and desires are. The decisions that are made in such circumstances are fair because, by definition, they are unaffected by people's individual concerns and prejudices. Moreover, Rawls contends, in the original position people would choose two specific principles of justice—the first one guaranteeing everyone "equal basic liberties," and the second one, the "difference principle," allowing for inequalities (of wealth, status, and so on) only to the extent that these inequalities improve the lot of society's worst off.

Barber critiques Rawls in what have become familiar terms. He questions the neutrality and coherence of the original position, and he notes that the two principles of justice are not the inevitable outcome of decisions made under the veil of ignorance. But he offers particularly trenchant criticism of Rawls's failure to focus on the fundamental problems facing people today. "Terms suggestive of modern man's political dilemmas—racism, alienation, nationalism, citizenship, socialization, emancipation, indoctrination—are hardly to be found" in *A Theory of Justice,* Barber writes. Instead, Rawls offers examples that are often trivial and apolitical, such as choosing between a trip to Paris and a trip to Rome. How much help is a political philosophy that claims that from the standpoint of the theory of justice "the choice between a private-property economy and socialism is left open"? After all, Barber maintains, given the interdependence of political and economic institutions, and given that capitalism may bear some responsibility for the history of injustice in the West, "positing this kind of impartiality is like developing a geometry in which the question of whether parallel lines meet is left open."

Nozick, in Barber's estimate, is, if anything, less in touch with reality than is Rawls. In *Anarchy, State and Utopia,* Nozick offers a theoretical justification for the "minimal state," whose sole function is "protecting all its citizens against violence, theft, and fraud, and [enforcing] contracts, and so on." Redistributive taxation is illegitimate, Nozick claims, because it violates the individual's natural right to self-ownership and consequently constitutes a type of forced labor.

Barber finds Nozick's argument absurd because it starts with the assumption that the existence of the state needs to be justified. In other words, according to Nozick, we must first "prove" that anarchism is not, as political theorist Robert Paul Wolff once put it, "philosophically true." For Barber, philosophical truth is wholly irrelevant; *political* truth is what matters. As a result, he argues, one need not engage Nozick in philosophical debate; one simply has to examine the consequences of his theory—the sort of society that would result from it. And when one looks "at the world of the 1980s and the triumph of absolute right and the market mentality over public good and community," one realizes immediately that Nozick's minimal-state construct is seriously misguided.

Nozick implies that the minimal state might produce political results not to his liking but still insists that a more interventionist state would be unjust. Yet "[i]n politics," Barber argues, "consequences are central, not peripheral; and if consequences are repellent, the prudent course may be to reappraise premises." The political world, Barber maintains, is anything but pristine: our choice is rarely between justice and injustice, but between greater or lesser forms of injustice, between consequences that are more or less tolerable, acceptable, or legitimate. As Barber writes, quoting Brecht, "It is a fearsome thing to kill, but it is not granted to us not to kill."

There is a great deal to recommend in Barber's overall approach. Much of political philosophy *is* detached from political reality, and many philosophers would do well to exchange analytic rigor for political relevance—to focus less energy on abstract truth, more on the exigencies of a complex world. Barber is most convincing when he argues that political consciousness is different from philosophical consciousness, that cloistered detachment from active, democratic self-government renders the philosopher incapable of making wise moral decisions.

Still, Barber is seriously mistaken to consign philosophy to political insignificance. He himself is compelled to admit as much. He acknowledges, for example, that Nozick's book "is reputed to have sat invitingly on the desks of Ford administration staffers in the mid-1970s" and that it has become "a kind of *locus classicus* of the Reagan era's aggressive free-market privatism." Barber also bemoans the influence liberal political philosophy has exerted over our culture—a culture that has "alienated men and women ... from their fellows" and left them "vulnerable ... to meaninglessness and authoritarianism."

Indeed, philosophy *should* influence politics. Barber may be right to claim that we are citizens first. But part of being a citizen—indeed, of being human—is being a philosopher. Maybe not a hoary philosopher of the academy, but a philosopher nonetheless: someone involved in moral debate, in discussion about what constitutes justice and the good life.

Barber's hesitancy to engage in philosophy seems to stem from his single-minded focus on consequences. Consequences should certainly play a significant role in moral decision making, but Barber takes the additional step of implying that nonconsequentialist concerns are rarely worthy of serious consideration. He argues that "[t]o be political is . . . to . . . make judgments without guiding standards or norms," to evaluate conduct "on the basis of its effects rather than its intentions." And he adds that, if the consequences of making a particular decision are more tolerable than the consequences of not making it, the decision should be made "*regardless of its philosophical status* [emphasis added]."

This is a strange position coming from someone who speaks of justice and moral legitimacy. It is generally acknowledged, for example, that a law enforcement officer, responding to a murder, may not execute an innocent individual in order to calm a lynch mob and prevent the deaths of several people. Similarly, it is not acceptable for a doctor to kill an innocent patient, removing her organs, in order to save five other patients. People may not be used simply as instruments toward some desirable end. After all, *how* we act is at least as important as the consequences of our actions.

Barber would respond, I suppose, that hypothetical examples about law enforcement officers and doctors don't get at the complexities of moral decision making in the nuclear age. When millions of lives hang in the balance, moral purity is impossible: we must frequently, through decision or indecision, sacrifice the innocent in order to prevent dire consequences.

True enough. But what's disturbing about Barber's argument is his assumption that moral principles are therefore pointless. The appropriate response is not to throw out moral principles, but to recognize that exceptions must be made in certain circumstances.

Take Michael Walzer's discussion in *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977) of the decision to bomb German cities during World War II—a decision that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Here Walzer, who has just dedicated 250 pages to arguing that justice *in* war is distinct from the justice *of* war (that countries must—


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and do—accept limitations on how they engage in battle), is caught in a bind. He has argued that the intentional killing of civilians is unacceptable, yet he recognizes that the seemingly imminent triumph of nazism represented such a threat to the safety of the whole world that "one might well be required to override the rights of innocent people and shatter the war convention." In the end, he asserts, some of the bombing was probably justified.

Still, Walzer articulates his position under great moral pain. "This is not an easy argument to make," he writes, "and ... we must resist every effort to make it easier.... If one is forced to bomb cities ... it is best to acknowledge that one has been forced to kill the innocent."

For Walzer, political exigency occasionally calls on us to make exceptions to moral principle; but it certainly doesn't demand, as Barber would have it, that we abandon moral principle altogether. La Rochefoucauld's words are instructive for the political decision maker who must at times reject moral convention: "Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue."

Such a response probably wouldn't satisfy Barber, since he does not see where philosophical principles lead us even in the more mundane decisions of daily politics:

> Do we permit fetuses to be killed or take from women the right to control their own bodies? ... Do we bust up neighborhoods in order to integrate schools or jeopardize equal educational opportunity to preserve neighborhood solidarity? ... Do we build a single artificial heart or fund ten thousand hospital beds? ... Show me a decision that does not involve trade-offs; show me the trade-off that formal criteria can help us evaluate.

But Barber must recognize that it is impossible to make such decisions without invoking moral—hence philosophical—arguments. How can we even speak of "justice" if we do not hold principles about what's just and what isn't? Philosophy, broadly construed, does a great deal more than Barber acknowledges. The jurors in Bernhard Goetz's trial, for example, determined Goetz's fate based on whether they thought a "reasonable" person would have shot the youths who allegedly tried to mug him on the subway in New York. This is only one plausible philosophical standard, and it has to be argued for against other contenders. After all, Goetz could have been judged on his "sincerity" (his guilt being a function of whether *he* genuinely believed he was acting in self-defense), or on the principle that vigilantism is permissible (his guilt being a function of whether the *particular* punishment he meted out was reasonable), or even on the basis of the repugnant but frequently articulated claim that a more lenient standard be applied to him since the youths he was attacking were Black and Blacks commit a disproportionate number of violent crimes.

In short, the most Barber can legitimately argue is that philosophy is insufficient, not that it's unnecessary. In that case, however, he is knocking down a straw man, since no political philosopher claims to provide a magical mathematical formula that gives a precise answer to every political dilemma. Philosophers are no more responsible for failing to come up with such a formula than are biologists, linguists, or plumbers.

Finally, it is worth examining what Barber offers as an alternative to philosophy. Democracy, he claims, is philosophy's antidote. Democratic participation "integrates us, making individuals into citizens and creating from disparate parts a single people." When successful, democracy transforms "common weakness into social equality, common dependency into social mutuality, common exploitation into social cooperation, and common fear into social security." Instead of abstract philosophy, we have "common judgment"; instead of moral principle, "common sense."

We should, of course, take common sense seriously; but we shouldn't follow it reflexively. After all, the mere fact that something is common doesn't automatically mean it makes sense. Yesterday's common sense is often today's prejudice, and today's common sense will no doubt appear foolish tomorrow—provided that it doesn't destroy us before we get there. It is strange that Barber—who is supremely concerned about the impact of "propaganda," "advertising," "alienation," and "indoctrination" on society—can so blithely posit faith in common sense, as if these forces affected only our philosophy and nothing else.

*Philosophers are no more responsible for providing a precise answer to every political dilemma than are biologists, linguists, or plumbers.*

Perhaps Barber thinks that common sense will indeed be reliable once we live in a more genuinely democratic age. But beyond endorsing "civic education" and "styles of political participation that go well beyond occasional voting," he is curiously silent as to how one brings about this democratic transformation. In fairness to Barber, he has addressed this issue in more detail elsewhere, particularly in *Strong Democracy* (1984). But the question remains how one creates genuine democracy in a world that, as Barber writes, is characterized by "multinational corporations, ... irredentist nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and the constant threat of nuclear oblivion." It was a lot easier being Tocqueville 150 years ago.

Even if Barber's more harmonious society were to arise, philosophical conflict would not disappear. The question would remain: who should prevail in democratic debate? Not, one hopes, the people who scream the loudest. Better those who convince their fellow citizens, who make the most morally compelling arguments. In that case, the problem is not, as Barber would have it, that philosophers are too "plentiful." What we need is better philosophy, not less of it. □

FILM REVIEW

# Film Noir

*Michael Eric Dyson*

In 1986, a distinct phase in contemporary African-American cinema commenced. Spike Lee wrote, produced, directed, and acted in *She's Gotta Have It,* an independently made sex comedy that cost $175,000 but grossed over $6 million after distribution by Island Pictures. Since then Lee, and an expanding cadre of Black filmmakers, including Robert Townsend, Keenen Ivory Wayans, and Euzhan Palcy, have written and directed a number of films that explore various themes in Black life. Lee in particular creates films that are part of a revival of Black nationalism (neonationalism), a movement that includes provocative expressions in the cultural sphere (elements of rap music, the wearing of African medallions), interesting interventions in the intellectual sphere (articulations of Afrocentric perspectives in academic disciplines), and controversial developments in the social sphere (symbolized by Louis Farrakhan's "Nation of Islam" ideology, which enjoys narrow but significant popularity among Blacks). Lee, foremost among his Black director peers, is concerned with depicting the sociopolitical implications of his Afrocentric film aesthetic and neonationalist worldview.

But he is also determined to display the humanity of his characters, and he insists upon exploring the unacknowledged diversity and the jarring and underappreciated contradictions of Black life. Lee, however, is confronted with a conflict: how to present the humanity of Black folk without lapsing into an ontology of race that structures simplistic categories of being for Black people and Black culture that are the worst remnants of old-style Black nationalism. Such constructions of Black character and culture fail to express the complex diversity of Black humanity.

On the one hand, because Lee is apparently committed to a static conception of racial identity, his characters appear as products of an archetypal mold that predetermines their responses to a range of sociohistorical situations. These characters are highly symbolic and widely representative, reflecting Lee's determination to repel the folkloric symbols of racism through racial countersymbol. On the other hand, Lee must revise his understanding of racial identity in order to present the humanity of Black characters successfully. He must permit his characters to possess irony, self-reflection, and variability, qualities that, when absent—no matter the high aims that underlie archetypal representation—necessarily circumscribe agency and flatten humanity. It is in the electric intersection of these two competing and at times contradictory claims, of Black cultural neonationalism and Black humanism, that Lee's art takes place.

In *Do the Right Thing,* Lee's Black neonationalism leaps off the screen through brilliant cinematography and riveting messages. As most Americans know, *Do the Right Thing* is about contemporary racism. The film's action is concentrated in a single block of Brooklyn's "Bed-Stuy" neighborhood on a scorching summer day. The heat, both natural and social, is a central metaphor for the film's theme of tense race relations. The pivotal place of social exchange in this compact, ethnically diverse, and highly self-contained community is Sal's Famous Pizzeria, the single vestige of white-owned business in "Bed-Stuy." Sal (Danny Aiello) owns and operates the restaurant along with his two sons, Pino (John Turturro) and Vito (Richard Edson), proud Italians who make the daily commute from the suburb of Bensonhurst. Lee plays Mookie, the hardworking but responsibility-shirking delivery man for Sal's, and the primary link between the community and the pizzeria. Mookie seems able to maneuver easily between worlds—until late in the film, when the community erupts in a riot at Sal's, prompted by an egregious instance of police brutality.

In choosing to explore the racial tension between Italian-Americans and African-Americans, Lee makes explicit reference to Howard Beach, employing it as an ideologically charged conceptual foil for his drama about American racism. Lee makes allusions to the Howard Beach incident throughout the movie: Sal brandishes a baseball bat in conflicts with various Black patrons; the crowd chants "Coward Beach" at the riot. Lee wants his movie to provoke discussion about racism in the midst of a racially repressive era, when all such discourse is either banished to academia (though not much discussion goes on there either) or considered completed in the distant past. Lee rejects the premises of this Reagan-era illogic and goes straight to the heart of the mechanism that disseminates and reinforces racial repression: the image, the symbol, the representation. *Do the Right Thing* contains symbols of racism and resistance to racism, representations of Black life, and images of Black nationalist sensibilities and thought.

Lee creates symbols that reveal the remorseless persistence of racism in quotidian quantity, exposing the psychopathology of everyday racism as it accumulates in small doses, over the course of days not unlike the one we witness in *Do the Right Thing.* Lee shows us the little bruises, the minor frustrations, and the minute but myriad racial fractures that mount without healing. There is the riff of the prickly relations between the Black residents and the Koreans who own

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the neighborhood market. There is the challenge of Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn), a menacing bundle of brawn who wields his boom box as a weapon to usurp communal aural space as he practices his politics of cultural terrorism. But the central symbol of racial conflict is the ongoing tiff between Buggin' Out and Sal over the latter's refusal to place photos of Black people on Sal's Wall of Fame, reserved for the likes of DiMaggio, Stallone, and Sinatra. Sal and Buggin' Out's battle over the photographs, over the issue of *representing* Black people, makes explicit the terms of the film's representational warfare.

Lee's decision to provoke discussion about racism is heroic. He exposes a crucial American failure of nerve, a stunning loss of conscience about race. But beyond this accomplishment, how much light does he shed by raising the question of racism in the manner that he does? Lee's perspective portrays a view of race and racism that, while it manages to avoid a facile Manichaeanism, nevertheless slides dangerously close to a vision of "us" and "them," in which race is seen solely through the lens of biological determinism.

The problem with such biological determinism is that it construes racial identity as a unidimensional, monocausal reality that can be reduced to physically inheritable characteristics. Racial identity is an ever-evolving, continually transforming process that is never fully or finally exhausted by genetics and physiology. It is constantly structured and restructured, perennially created and re-created, in a web of social practices, economic conditions, gendered relations, material realities, and historical situations that are themselves shaped and reshaped. As the feminist critique of Freud asserts, anatomy is not destiny; likewise, biology is not identity.

Black cultural neonationalism obscures the role of elements such as gender, class, and geography in the construction of racial identity, and by so doing limits its resources for combating racial oppression. Consider the film's end, in which Lee juxtaposes quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X which posit the harm versus the help of violence in aid of Black liberation. Lee has not stumbled serendipitously toward an interpretive framework that summarizes the two options open to Black folk in fighting racism: Lee's neonationalist perspective has regulated his presentation of the problem of racism in the movie all along.

Furthermore, Lee's neonationalism determines which quotes he uses. As Lee knows, it can be argued that, before their deaths, King and X were converging in their understanding of race and racism. Both of them were developing an understanding of racial identity and racism that was much more complex, open-ended, ecumenical, and international than the one they had previously. King was changing because of his more radical comprehension of the relationship between race and class, and thus began to promote a more aggressive version of nonviolent resistance. X was changing, too, because of his visit to Mecca and his expanding conception of the possibilities of interracial solidarity. Each man also borrowed elements of analysis from the other, appropriating those lessons in ways that had the potential to chart a much different path for resistance to oppression in the seventies and on. By using these quotes from King and X, free of context, Lee gives an anachronistic and ahistorical reading of the two figures. Presenting these quotes as a basis of present options may provide some conceptual and emotive resources for debate, but does little to enlighten. Lee freezes the meanings of these two men, instead of utilizing their mature thought as a basis for *reconceiving* the problem of racism to address *our* particular set of historical circumstances.

Lee's neonationalist leanings also affect his characters, who become mere archetypes. Buggin' Out (Giancarlo Esposito) is the local radical, a caricature of deep commitment, who is more rabble-rouser than thoughtful insurgent. Smiley (Roger Guenveur Smith) is the stuttering conscience, first seen in front of the Yes Jesus Can Baptist Church. He hawks photographs of the famous meeting between King and X to reluctant passersby. Ossie Davis plays Da Mayor, the neighborhood drunk, who represents older Black men who were scathed by economic desperation and personal failure, and whose modus vivendi is shaped by the bottle. Ruby Dee (Davis's real-life wife) is Mother Sister, a lonely Black woman who represents the neighborhood's omniscient eye. She is a possible victim of desertion by a man like Da Mayor, or a woman who was determined and independent before her time (or perhaps both). Joie Lee, Spike's real-life sister, plays Mookie's sister Jade, and represents the responsible and stable Black woman. She must support and suffer Mookie, her affectionately irascible brother, whom she chides for not taking care of his son. Mookie's son's mother, Tina (Rosie Perez), is the Latin firebrand who extemporizes in colorful neologism about Mookie's domestic shortcomings. And a trio of middle-aged Black men, Sweet Dick Willie, ML, and Coconut Sid (Robin Harris, Paul Benjamin, and Frankie Faison), represent the often humorous folk philosophy of a generation of Black males who have witnessed the opening of socioeconomic opportunity for others, but who must cope with a more limited horizon for themselves.

In one respect, Lee's use of archetypal Black figures is salutary, as it expands the register of Black characters in contemporary cinema. But the larger effect is harmful, and is a measure both of Hollywood's deeply entrenched racism and of the limitation of Lee's neonationalist worldview. Lee follows a tradition of sorts, as the attempt to decenter prevalent conceptions of racial behavior began in earnest in the twenties in Oscar Micheaux's films. A much later attempt to shift from stereotype to archetype in Black film was crudely rendered in Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971). Although Lee is lightyears ahead of Van Peebles in most respects, he still adopts a crucial element of Van Peebles's work: the representative archetype.

Lee is unable to meld his two ambitions—to present the breadth of Black humanity while proclaiming a Black neonationalist aesthetic. His attempt to present a Black universe is admirable, but that universe must be one in which people genuinely act and do not simply respond as mere archetypal constructions. Because the characters carry such weighty symbolic significance (resonant though it might be), they must act like symbols, not like humans. As a result, their story seems predetermined, a by-product of a complicated configuration of social, personal, and political situations.

The archetypal model accounts for the manner in which Lee portrays the

white characters, particularly Sal and sons. Pino is the vicious ethnic chauvinist who clings tightly to his Italian identity and heritage for fear of finding himself awash in the tide of "nigger"-loving that seems to soak his other family members. Vito is the ethnic pluralist, an easygoing and impressionable young man whose main distinction is that he has no major beef with the Blacks and Puerto Ricans. Only Sal, who splits the difference between his two sons, manages to rise to some complexity. He is a proud businessman whose longstanding relationship with the community has endeared him to most of the neighborhood's residents. But when provoked, he is not above hurling the incendiary racial epithet, which on one fateful occasion seals his destiny by beginning the riot that destroys his store.

This Saturday night Sal keeps the store open late to accommodate a group of neighborhood kids. That is when Radio Raheem (boom box in tow and pumping loud) and Buggin' Out shout a final request to place photos of Blacks on the wall. After Radio Raheem refuses to lower the volume of his box, Sal, driven to an understandable frenzy, crushes the radio with his baseball bat. Radio Raheem also behaves understandably. He grabs Sal, pulls him over the counter, and the two men struggle from the store into the street. The police arrive and attempt to restrain Radio Raheem using the infamous New York Police "chokehold," a potentially lethal technique, especially when applied to Black male necks. The police let Radio Raheem drop dead to the ground, kick him, and drag him into a police car. Meanwhile, they have handcuffed Buggin' Out and carted him away. The crowd is horror-stricken. Mookie, until now the mediator of disputes between Sal and the community, takes sides with his neighbors and throws a trash can through Sal's window, catalyzing the riot. The crowd destroys the pizzeria, overturning tables and equipment and taking money from the cash register. But it is stuttering Smiley who starts the fire. In African-American religious tradition, the Holy Spirit appears before believers in the form of fire. Smiley's torch is the articulation of his religious passion.

Lee's portrayal of police brutality, which has claimed the lives of too many Black people, is disturbingly honest. The encounter between Radio Raheem and Sal is poignant and instructive. It shows that a Black person's death may be provoked by incidents of racial antagonism gone amok, and that it is easy for precious young Black life to be sacrificed in the gritty interstices between anger and abandonment. Thus, we can understand the neighborhood's consuming desire to destroy property—avenging the murder of a son whose punishment does not fit his crime.

It is also understandable that the crowd destroys Sal's place, the pizzeria being the nearest representative of destructive white presence, a white presence that has just denied Radio Raheem his future. But Sal certainly doesn't represent the "powers" that Public Enemy rapped about so fearlessly on Radio Raheem's box. As Lee knows, the character of racism has changed profoundly in the last few decades, and even though there are still too many ugly reassertions of overt racism, it is often the more subtle variety that needs to be identified and fought.

For instance, after viewing Lee's film many people may leave the theater smugly self-confident that they are not racists because they are not petty-bourgeois Italian businessmen, because they don't call people niggers, and because they are not policemen who chokehold Black men to death. But contemporary racism is often the teacher who cannot take a Black student seriously, who subtly dismisses her remarks in class because they are "not really central," or because he has presumed, often unconsciously, a limit to her abstract reasoning. (The double whammy of race and gender operate here.) Contemporary racism is often middle-level Black managers hitting a career ceiling that is ostensibly due to their lack of high-level management skills, which, of course, are missing not because of lack of intelligence but because they have not acquired the right *kinds* of experience. Contemporary racism is not about being kept out of a clothes store, but rather about not being taken seriously because the store clerk presumes you won't spend your money, or that you have none to spend.

To assert that racism is most virulent at Sal's level misses the complex ways in which everyday racism is structured, produced, and sustained in multifarious social practices, cultural traditions, and intellectual justifications. Sal is as much a victim of his racist worldview as he is its perpetrator. By refusing to probe the shift in the modus operandi of American racism, Lee misses the opportunity to expose what the British cultural critic Stuart Hall calls inferential racism, the "apparently naturalized representation of events and situations relating to race, whether factual or 'fictional,' which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions."

*Many people may leave the theater smugly self-confident that they are not racists because they don't call people niggers, and because they are not policemen who chokehold Black men to death.*

Those who strive to resist the new-style racism must dedicate themselves to pointing out slippery attitudes and ambiguous actions that signal the presence of racism without appearing to do so. This strategy must include drawing attention to unintended racist statements, actions, and thoughts, which nevertheless do harm. These strategies must be accompanied by sophisticated, high-powered intellectual dialogue about how the nature of particular forms of Western discourse provide the expression, reproduction, and maintenance of racist ideology and practices. People must form interracial, international lines of solidarity and develop analyses of racism in tandem with similar analyses of sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, homophobia, ecological terrorism, and a host of other progressive concerns.

Perhaps nothing does more to symbolize the shadowed brilliance of Lee's project, the troubled symbiosis of his Black neonationalist vision and his desire to represent Black humanity, than a scene in which Mookie is completing an argument with Jade. After they depart, the camera fixes on the graffiti on the wall: "Tawana told the truth!" It is understandable, given Lee's

perspective, that he chooses to retrieve this fresh and tortured signifier from the iconographical reservoir of Black neonationalists, some of whom believe Tawana transcends her infamous circumstances and embodies the reality of racial violence in our times. Racial violence on every level is vicious now, but Tawana is not its best or most powerful symbol. Lee's invocation of Tawana captures the way in which many positive aspects of neonationalist thought are damaged by close association with ideas and symbols that hurt more than help. Yes, it is important to urge racial self-esteem, a vision for racial progress, the honoring of historical figures, and the creation of powerful culture, but not if the result is a new kind of bigotry. For this reason we must criticize Lee's proximity to Louis Farrakhan's ideological stances. Real transformation of our condition will come only as we explore the resources of progressive thought, social action, and cultural expression that were provided by figures like King, X, Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Lorraine Hansberry, Pauli Murray, and Ida B. Wells. But we can't wallow in unimaginative mimesis. These people's crucial insights, cultural expressions, and transformative activities must inspire us to think critically and imaginatively about our condition, and help us generate profound and sophisticated responses to our own crises. Only then will we be able to do the right thing. □

FILM REVIEW

# *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade:* Serial Mythmash

*Harvey R. Greenberg*

Steven Spielberg desperately wants to recreate ancient legends for enjoyment at the local sixplex. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is the third installment of the wildly successful series about the indefatigable archaeologist Indiana Jones, and is Spielberg's latest attempt at Sunset Boulevard mythopoesis. Armed with courage, American know-how, and a bullwhip, Indy once again saves a revered icon of Western culture from despicable foreign plunderers. Spielberg wants Indy to appear as a bigger-than-life reinvention of a matinee serial hero from the forties, acting out a saga with overtones of Homeric, Oedipal, and Arthurian legend. Unfortunately, the director's special-effects wizardry cannot sustain the myth of Indy. Instead, Spielberg has produced a mythmash of exotic scenery, furious chases, and one-dimensional characters.

Like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, The Last Crusade* is a "prequel" to *Raiders of the Lost Ark.* A past has been invented for our hero, centered around Indy's chronic estrangement from his curmudgeon father. Professor Henry Jones's competitive and disapproving demeanor is briefly established during early scenes from Indy's adolescence. The father is revealed as a noted medievalist with a lifelong obsession with the Holy Grail. His wife died young, and he was so consumed with work, so neglectful and critical of Indy, that the boy left home at an early age.

The action flashes forward to 1938. A grown-up Indy returns from his latest perilous escapade to resume a quiet academic life. His first class is hardly over when an American tycoon (who turns out to be in secret league with the Nazis) commissions Indy to find the Grail. The tycoon says that he previously enlisted Indy's father for the same purpose after hearing that Professor Jones had discovered new evidence in Venice proving the Grail's existence. At first, Indy truculently resists becoming involved with his father's monomaniacal quest. Then he learns that the professor has mysteriously vanished. Indy receives the professor's notebooks in the mail, apparently posted on the brink of his disappearance. Using the notebooks to complete Jones's Venetian research, Indy discovers that during the Crusades the Grail was hidden away in a mountain stronghold deep within Arabia Deserta.

Indy traces his father to an Austrian castle, where the Waffen SS has imprisoned him. The two escape, journey across Europe into the Middle East, and air their grievances as they fight off the pursuing Hun from motorcycle, zeppelin, airplane, and horseback. The chilly relationship between father and son gradually thaws. Professor Jones realizes the depth of his long-disavowed affection when he mistakenly believes Indy has been killed.

Good and Evil questors finally meet in the caverns of the desert peak. Indy survives a gauntlet of deadly challenges and enters the chamber where the Grail is enshrined, guarded by the same knight who placed it there centuries ago. The Nazis and their minions perish, but not before Professor Jones is mortally wounded. Indy uses the Grail's power to save his father, then returns the Grail to eternal rest with its chivalrous keeper. *The Last Crusade* ends with Jones Senior and Junior literally riding off into the sunset.

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* * *

The Saturday matinee serials of the forties have had a decisive influence upon the cinema of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. (The present film, like its predecessors, was directed by Spielberg in close association with Lucas.) In *The Last Crusade,* Spielberg again naively embraces the serials' ingrained prejudices, which in turn are directly traceable to the blatant biases about race, ethnicity, and class found in the "penny dreadful" fiction devoured by middle- and upper-class boys earlier in the century.

*The heroes of action-film sequels demonstrate the grossest symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder: morbid egotism, exhibitionism, a resolute lack of empathy, and a flagrant disregard for the general welfare.*

*The Last Crusade* shows that Spielberg the adult still shares an uncritical receptivity toward this sort of bias. Moreover, he is now hawking this prejudice to the audience. It was more pardonable in the youngsters. (Memory from my World War II childhood: in front of Philadelphia's Renel theater, my seven-year-old buddies and I debate how many "Jap" soldiers are worth one American trooper. The going rate before we see *Wake Island* is four to one; afterward, we realize how shamefully we have shortchanged American valor. No doubt about it—one Marine is worth ten craven little sadists!)

The typical serial propelled its white-bread hero into a series of near-lethal confrontations with a variety of villainous "others." Westerns, crime and spy capers, space operas, and various adventures in exotic climes constituted the most popular serial genres. Spy and "jungle" serials were especially riddled with racial and ethnic slurs. The Anglo-Saxon hero's nemesis in the spy serial was often a mad mastermind of frankly alien race like Fu Manchu, apotheosis of the Yellow Peril, bent on world domination. Or he came from a dubious Balkan, crypto-Semitic heritage—for example, Bela Lugosi's Dr. Boroff, known as "Master Spy and Munitions Overlord" in the serial *SOS Coastguard.*

In the adventure and jungle serials the archvillain was an unprincipled prince, leader of a death cult, or less frequently a shady Western entrepreneur after buried treasure or mineral rights. His henchmen were drawn from the lower classes or the criminal underworld. In the adventure genre, they were of basest mixed blood, a Kiplingesque stew of half-castes. Less toxic but no less demeaning Orientalist caricatures included helpless villagers, comic servants, capering pickaninnies, and the hero's selflessly dedicated "native" assistant.

Viewers sensitive to these stereotypes were especially offended by *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom,* which managed to reprise virtually every repellent distortion of the jungle serial. Third World people were represented by a squalid tribe totally dependent upon a white adventurer for rescue, jeweled nabobs dining on monkey brains, and treacherous thugs who flourished after the British departed the Raj. A ditzy blonde heroine consistently got in Indy's way, meanwhile outscreaming Fay Wray.

In *The Last Crusade,* Spielberg has cannily retreated to safer ground, once more making Nazis the nasties. Nazi evil is now generic, curiously drained of historical reference, as in some postwar German school textbooks. "I hate those guys!" is Indy's sole political appraisal of his enemies. Ironically, the apostles of race hatred themselves are portrayed as racial stereotypes, appearing as the megalomaniacal, leering, criminal masterminds of the serials. (A similar shift in serial villains away from the Dr. Boroffs and Fu Manchus to the Nazis and Japanese occurred during World War II.)

The covert racism of the serials can be seen also in the Nazis' hirelings—a corrupt sultan and his feckless soldiers. "Good" stereotypes include Sallah, Indy's paunchy Arab buddy from *Raiders,* and the murderous, but noble, brotherhood of the Cruciform Sword, a band of Arab Christians who have protected the Grail against violation for two millennia.


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It's life eternal, not the ideology of the Master Race, that appeals to the turncoat American magnate. He is the jungle serial's tainted, white venture capitalist, and he fits in well with the current Hollywood penchant for portraying Big Business as a target for viewer hatred as uncontroversial as Hitler and Qaddafi.

A brief love interest is supplied by a film-noirishly duplicitous art historian who shares Indy's passion for the Grail *sans* patriotism. She first beds father, then son, to get the Grail. Consistent with the sexist patriarchal sensibility that fashioned the serials (and still informs much feature fare today), women are depicted in the Indy pictures as shrill mascots or spider ladies. Either way, the companionable misogyny of the prepubescent gang prevails; it's implied that men do better alone or in safe male company.

* * *

A supertechnological invention, often a laser-like death ray, was a Saturday serial mainstay. Like the *Star Wars* cycle, the analogous Force of the *Indy* movies is spiritual rather than scientific. It sizzles out of a fabled holy artifact. In *The Last Crusade,* it's the Grail; in *Raiders,* it's the Ark of the Covenant. Spielberg assumes that Indy has every right to pilfer archaeological objects from their native cultures and put them where they rightfully belong—*in Western museums.* After all, doesn't Indy track down these relics at entertainingly terrifying risk, for the benefit of Science? Doesn't he snatch these revered icons from the Powers of Darkness for the good of Western Civilization?

The screenplay implies that possession of the Grail will grant immortality

to Hitler and his cohorts, making a ten-thousand-year Reich a reality. According to ten-year-old-boy logic, this makes sense, but it doesn't say much for the Deity's common sense. In the current dubious Gospel According to Spielberg, a transcendent Godhead's power is insultingly wedded to Its symbolic representation, not vice versa. Whoever owns the Grail or Ark has God in his or her pocket, and God has no more to say on the subject than does a genie in a jug.

* * *

It's apparent that the quest for the Grail is meant as a metaphor for the arduous odyssey toward reconciliation undertaken by its two heroes. Alienation of father from son has been a wellspring of myth from the *Oedipus* plays to *Death of a Salesman*. George Lucas studied with the late myth critic Joseph Campbell and credits him for influencing the *Star Wars* cycle, which focused upon Luke Skywalker's troubled paternity. Spielberg mines the same territory in *The Last Crusade,* with the same grandiose designs and mediocre results seen in *Return of the Jedi.*

Campbell's work is elegant, complex; Lucas and Spielberg fancy a quote from Frank Capra profound. Like Lucas, Spielberg cribs a few "high" concepts from Campbell—The Return of the King, The Hero's Testing for Worthiness—and drapes them over the armature of popular entertainment. Perhaps the serial format is too fragile to carry heavy symbolic baggage. Certainly other standard Hollywood fare has plumbed myth artfully, intentionally or otherwise. (The Jungian psychoanalyst John Beebe has written persuasively on the artist's unconscious ability to channel collective themes.) One recalls Hitchcock's poignant restaging of the Tristan and Isolde saga in *Vertigo* or the doppelgänger motif in *Strangers on a Train,* and the Oedipal undertones energizing Howard Hawks's classic western, *Red River.*

Myth is deeply, subtly embedded in such films; a viewer needn't know anything about archetypes to find pleasure in them. But Spielberg doesn't have Hitchcock's literacy or intellectual power, or Hawks's talent for realizing strong characterization through vivid action. Ultimately, he's limited by a remarkable but facile visual sense. Bellowed out in hectic, unevocative clashes between cardboard antagonists, the mythic elements of Indy's story are rendered meaningless. One feels bathos instead of pathos as Indy/Parsifal administers balm from the Grail to Professor Jones, wounded Amfortas-like. Professor Jones's instantaneous recovery possesses the emotional resonance of a Ben-Gay commercial.

* * *

As *The Last Crusade* opens, young Indy stumbles upon a dig, steals a priceless cross, and is pursued across a desert by renegade archaeologists. This is assured filmmaking, worthy of Hawks and reminiscent of the exuberant opening of *Raiders.* During the exhilarating chase, Spielberg deftly establishes the origins of Indy's iconography—whip, hat, chin scar, snake phobia. But once Father and Grail are introduced, *The Last Crusade* curiously loses power. The director becomes bound up in the very conventions of the adolescent adventure film he is striving to transcend.

A cliffhanger ending, then a week's wait for the outcome, were integral to the small enjoyments of the Saturday serial. Attempting to exceed the frissons of the earlier Indy films, Spielberg piles one unbelievable cliffhanger and its resolution upon another, virtually without pause, past the point of satiation. It's action porn—too many chocolate chips. John Williams's score is a symphonic blare, relentlessly repeating Indy's theme to the point of nausea.

Harrison Ford and Sean Connery play themselves playing their roles, megastars in megastance. An encounter between an aging James Bond and a wise-guy young American, heir to the Bond tradition, might be appealing in other hands. (Indeed, a case could be made that Spielberg wants to outstrip the Bond films as well as the serials here.) Ford and Connery hurl vapid epigrams about their disappointment in each other across the generation gap, and Connery spouts New Age blather about the Necessity for Every Man to Find His Own Grail of Inner Spiritual Truth. Ultimately, one couldn't care less about Henry Jones's resurrection through Indy's love. The platitudes of the Boy Scout manual ring infinitely more sincere.

* * *

A hollow gigantism pervades *The Last Crusade* and many pictures like it today. Aiming to repeat earlier blockbuster successes, filmmakers are busily birthing a succession of empty clones. The plots of these McMovies seem to exist only to set the scene for outbreaks of special-effect–ridden violence. Dialogue is minimal, banal; the characters are stripped down to cartoon-like stock figures.

The heroes of action-film sequels demonstrate the grossest symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder: morbid egotism, exhibitionism, a resolute lack of empathy, and a flagrant disregard for the general welfare—mandated, of course, by a perilous mission undertaken for the "common good." See *Raiders* again, and you'll find that Indy appears far more insensitive and violent now than eight years ago. The same may be said about America under the Great Communicator's amiably ruthless reign.

It's clear that Spielberg hoped to go beyond mere profit in concluding the *Indy* cycle. The personal Grail he has sought for years is the transformation of middle- or lowbrow culture material, often culled from juvenile pulp fiction or cinema, into something infinitely finer: accessible epic, a pop version of that fusion of story, sight, and sound that Wagner called *Gesamptkunstwerk* ("total work of art"). *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is well on its way to being one of the most lucrative films of all time. But instead of a *Gesamptkunstwerk,* Spielberg has furnished an unwitting testament to the intellectual impoverishment and puerile self-inflation that pervades cinema today. □

# Current Debate: Abortion

## *Being Ambivalent About Abortion*

*Ruth Anna Putnam*

Larry Letich (Abortion: Bad Choices *Tikkun,* Jul./Aug. 1989) wonders how the legality of abortion can remain controversial given that "over fifteen million American women have undergone" abortions since *Roe v. Wade.* What he does not understand is that that very figure—fifteen million abortions—horrifies many who before *Roe v. Wade* had no doubt that abortion should be legal. I am one of those who demonstrated in favor of legalizing abortion in those days; I still believe that abortions must remain legal. But I also believe that many, perhaps a majority, of those fifteen million abortions are morally indefensible. Neither Letich nor the pro-choice movement acknowledges this fact. They fail to explain that abortions must remain legal in spite of the fact that the result is many morally indefensible abortions. Instead, by claiming that a woman has a moral (not merely a legal) right to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy for whatever reason, the pro-choice movement inevitably draws one's thoughts to those cases in which the morality of an abortion is questionable.

Larry Letich notes correctly that some women need an abortion and that the pro-choice movement would do well to emphasize this fact. But he himself ignores that advice as soon as he speaks of "forced pregnancy." The only forced pregnancy is a pregnancy due to forced sex, that is, rape; but Letich considers any unwanted pregnancy a forced pregnancy. Letich also notes correctly that moral objections to abortion rest on the fact that the fetus is a potential human being, and that the pro-choice movement has not adequately dealt with this concern; but neither does he.

The abortion debate to date rests on the mistaken view that those who believe that abortions should be legal must show that abortions are morally permissible, and that, conversely, showing that abortion is immoral suffices to show that it should be outlawed. Abortion is not the only frequently immoral act that should nevertheless remain, for the most part, legal. It is almost always wrong to lie; it is (and should be) almost always legal. I shall argue that, while many abortions are immoral, abortions should remain legal within the limits established in *Roe v. Wade.*

I believe that abortion is justified when it is necessary to save the life, or the health, of the pregnant woman, which is the traditional Jewish view. I would add, as do Conservative rabbis, that the mental health of a woman is as important as her physical health. I also believe that it is morally permissible for victims of rape to choose an abortion (perhaps that falls under the mental health category, but I don't insist on that). Finally, whatever they may choose to do, I have only compassion for parents who learn that the fetus is severely defective—for example, that it has Tay-Sachs disease.

Though my position is more permissive than that of the Jewish authorities, it falls short of condoning all abortions. I do not recognize, indeed I emphatically deny, that a woman has an unqualified right to control her own body, or an unqualified right to choose what kind of life she wants to live. Any such right is limited by the rights of other human beings. For example, a woman has no right to kill her infant, nor does she have the right, while pregnant, to ingest food or drugs that will harm the fetus.

I believe that, while the fetus is not a human being at the moment of conception, it becomes more and more human as time goes on. Some Jewish authorities think that until the fortieth day after conception the fetus is in no sense human; that also happens to be the period when most spontaneous abortions occur. During that period, then, one would accept relatively weak reasons of physical or mental health as adequate grounds for an abortion. Thereafter such reasons must be more compelling. Once a woman can feel the motion of the fetus, she normally begins to form a strong emotional attachment; for her it becomes some*one* to care for rather than merely some*thing* to take care of. Correspondingly, her reasons for an abortion must be more powerful. Her health must be at serious risk, or the fetus must be severely defective. Finally, once the fetus is viable, only saving the mother's life can justify killing it.

*Abortions must remain legal. But I believe that many, perhaps a majority, of those fifteen million abortions are morally indefensible.*

I have just suggested how one can take seriously the claims of the fetus as a potential and developing human being while also taking seriously the claims of the woman to a healthful life. And, by implication, I have denied that women are entitled to choose an abortion simply because their pregnancy is unwanted, because, for example, they planned on two children and find themselves pregnant with a third, or because the pregnancy comes at an inconvenient time in their educational or career development. Yet, ever since abortions have been legal, many women have chosen and continue to choose abortions for just those reasons.

Why, then, do I oppose the overturning of *Roe v. Wade,* which would put the states in a position to write abortion

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laws limiting abortion to cases when it is morally or medically justifiable? Because such legislation is unworkable. On the one hand, it is humanly impossible to foresee all medical contingencies that would make abortion necessary for the sake of the woman's health. On the other hand, stipulating that all "necessary" abortions are permissible would create intolerable uncertainty and fear of legal repercussions. Any restrictive legislation will prevent some woman who really needs an abortion from obtaining it, resulting in dire consequences. Moreover, when abortions are strictly limited, or entirely prohibited, some women will choose illegal abortions which are expensive or unsafe or both. Some women will die from unsafe abortions, and others will be permanently harmed, and this burden will fall most heavily on poor women.

Outlawing abortions will probably save some potential human lives; but it will certainly cost some actual human lives. This is why abortions must remain legal: it is morally intolerable to risk women's lives. But that can only be the first step. The next must be to create a social, educational, and moral environment that will drastically reduce the number of abortions by providing adequate financial and child care support for women who keep their babies, by making adoption a more attractive alternative, by making birth control information and devices widely accessible, and by changing the moral climate. □

# *The Moral Vision of the Pro-choice Movement: A Response to Ruth Anna Putnam*

*Carole Joffe*

Larry Letich and Ruth Anna Putnam have each argued, in different ways, for the importance of bringing moral considerations into the abortion debate. If recent polls are correct, most Americans seem to share this concern as well; a majority of people apparently want *Roe v. Wade* upheld, but are troubled by the moral issues that abortion presents. I agree that the pro-choice movement should shift from a focus on "rights" to a broader discussion that includes an explicit moral dimension. However, shaping this discourse requires the avoidance of twin dangers. One is advocating an extreme form of moral relativism that leaves the moral high ground to the opposition. The other is the kind of moral absolutism, represented by Putnam's essay, that is inadequate to the complexities presented by abortion.

Putnam basically defines as "immoral" those abortions with which she does not agree, that is, all those abortions which are not caused by rape or do not pose a threat to the health of the mother. (Although she expresses "compassion" for parents of fetuses with genetic abnormalities, it is not clear that she considers abortions in such cases to be "moral" either.) By challenging those abortions that are done "simply" because the pregnancy is unwanted, Putnam dismisses as "morally indefensible" the choices made by a majority of the fifteen million abortion recipients since *Roe*. This judgment indicates extraordinarily little faith in the moral reasoning of millions of women. As one who has spent considerable time doing research in abortion facilities, I have found that most women come to the morally complex abortion decision after considerable reflection. Putnam's position is not useful because it is moralistic—what she does not like, she defines as "immoral."

A more fruitful route to an abortion morality which, unlike Putnam's, is rooted in context, comes from the experience of those who provide abortion services. The counselors, nurses, and physicians who work in abortion facilities are those, it must be recalled, who are charged with *acting* in this contested terrain that the rest of us argue about. Their unique position in the abortion debate gives them a particular, multifaceted moral stance on abortion. On the one hand, their interactions with their clients on a daily basis confirm for them the moral necessity to make safe, legal abortions available to all women; indeed, clinic workers feel that one of the key immoral aspects of the present abortion situation is that abortion is differentially available to women based on ability to pay. On the other hand, abortion providers don't "like" abortion. For this group, as with many others, abortion raises complicated questions about when life begins; as with the rest of us, how individual abortion providers answer these questions has much to do with personal background and religious and philosophical orientation. Not surprisingly, this group, like others, is more comfortable with earlier abortions than with later ones. (Though, it must be stressed, abortion providers firmly believe that the small fraction of women who need late abortions must be able to obtain them.)

But unlike the rest of us, whose views of abortion typically remain at an abstract level, this group is more attuned to the moral dimension of the human activity surrounding the circumstances of an abortion. Thus, abortion providers are particularly troubled by "repeaters," that fraction of abortion recipients who present themselves for their second, third, and in some cases, fourth abortions. Whether "repeaters" or not, those abortion recipients who are sexually active but who show no

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interest in using birth control are deemed by many providers to be acting "immorally."

From the responses of those who deal with abortion on a daily basis, we can see the outline of a pro-choice moral discourse. First, it is important to reaffirm that abortion is inseparable from the issue of sexual responsibility—abortion should not be used as a sole means of birth control. Moreover, earlier abortions are preferable to later ones, and fewer abortions are better than more abortions. Hence, an appropriate goal of the pro-choice movement is to reduce the need for abortions.

None of these three points are particularly new; they have been part of the sensibility of abortion providers for years. This neglected fact indicates that moral questioning has long gone on in pro-choice circles. Even more important, these points make evident the hypocritical—some would say "immoral"—role of the anti-abortion movement itself in creating more unwanted pregnancies and later abortions. For the actualization of these points depends on action at both the individual and the social level. Individuals, male and female, who choose to be sexually active but wish to avoid pregnancy must practice some form of birth control. Similarly, those who suspect they are pregnant must ascertain their condition promptly, so an early abortion can be obtained. At present, over 90 percent of abortions are in the first trimester of pregnancy, but the percentage could be even higher, especially if teenagers were educated about the importance of early detection. (At the same time, however, anti-abortionists' continual attacks on confidentiality policies at abortion clinics assure that some teenagers will delay obtaining an abortion as long as possible.)

Society's role in implementing these three objectives is quite obvious. First and foremost, it's time for this society to take birth control seriously. This means assuring the availability of confidential and free services to teenagers. It also requires increased governmental funding for contraceptive research (which is now nearly nonexistent and is particularly important in light of a recent study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute that reveals current contraceptive methods to be considerably less effective than once thought). Most crucial, though, those who perceive themselves in the middle of the abortion debate must be willing to stand up to "pro-lifers," in government and out, who oppose *both* abortion and contraception—and, until now, have paid astonishingly little political price for such hypocrisy.

Similarly there has to be a massive effort around sex education within schools and other social institutions, particularly in the media. Real sex education incorporates contraceptive and reproductive information and includes discussions of sexual responsibility and sexual dignity (for example, the inappropriateness of coercion) among young people of both genders. Again, this will happen only if those in the middle stand up to sexual conservatives who have thus far successfully intimidated those who would offer such comprehensive sex education.

Of course there should be financial and child-care aid to those who would continue their pregnancies if they could afford to support a family. Here, again, anti-abortion politicians and spokespeople must be called to account for their consistent opposition to social welfare programs. Similarly, support measures to make adoption more feasible, such as economic supplements for low-income families, are desirable.

However, I am extremely wary of the emergent use of adoption as a mantra by those who fantasize it as a quick fix for the abortion problem. Although adoption can be a wonderful solution for some, adoption as the "answer" to abortion raises issues of coercive childbearing, a point made by Ruth Rosen in the last issue of *Tikkun*. Furthermore, only a tiny portion of those single women experiencing unwanted births give their babies up for adoption—a point increasingly acknowledged by many anti-abortion groups.

In contrast to the anti-abortionists' certainties about "abortion as murder," a pro-choice moral discourse on abortion, involving as it does individual and social considerations, will always be more complex and certainly more difficult to market on a bumper sticker than "pro-life" slogans. But it is precisely our inability to confine the discussion of abortion morality to the single issue of abortion itself that is ultimately one of the movement's greatest strengths. Organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the Center for Population Options have long argued that the best way to reduce abortion is by preventing unwanted pregnancies—a goal that requires the kind of comprehensive strategies described above.

But the agenda of pro-choice organizations goes far beyond the goal of reducing abortions and unwanted pregnancies. It also includes advocacy for policies that help women who want to have children, but who encounter various difficulties. Therefore, the pro-choice worldview requires combating sterilization abuse and supporting research on infertility, particularly among low-income women, who suffer from higher rates of infertility than other women. These goals should remind us of what it is so easy to forget in this critical post-*Webster* period: the effort to keep abortion legal is only one aspect of a broader struggle for genuine reproductive freedom. □





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## LETTERS

*(Continued from p. 5)*

clarify the legal consciousness that he engendered. One need not rely solely on the Hirsch biography (apparently despised by Professor Henkin) to gain such insight. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that (even if he did not go all the way) Frankfurter distanced himself from his "alien" Jewishness in fervent pursuit of an idealized assimilationist Americanism, with direct consequences for his judicial performance and philosophy.

In a 1988 book about Frankfurter and Brandeis (*Two Jewish Justices: Outcasts in the Promised Land*), Professor Robert Burt of Yale Law School reports that Frankfurter "embraced American citizenship with an almost religious fervor, so that ... he was 'no longer an exile' but 'at home.'" Burt feels that Frankfurter

> believed his successful passage from alien to fully assimilated citizen gave him special insight as a judge into fundamental American values because he embodied those values in his own experience. He drew no protective mandate or special sympathy for outsiders, however, from this experience. He instead derived a mandate zealously to protect the values and status of insiders, such as he had become.

We suggested in our essay that there is a direct relationship between that assimilationist perspective and Jewish opposition to affirmative action. It surprises us not at all, then, that the first Supreme Court opinion denouncing affirmative action and invoking the model of "ethnic fungibility" characteristic of today's "reverse discrimination" charges was written in 1950 by Felix Frankfurter (*Hughes v. Superior Court,* 339 U.S. 460). In upholding the illegality of a demand by civil rights activists for proportional hiring of Blacks, Frankfurter suggested that to allow such a request would lead to similar claims on behalf "of Hungarians in Cleveland, of Poles in Buffalo, of Germans in Milwaukee...." To allow Blacks to assert the oppressive specificity of their American experience would, Frankfurter feared, exacerbate "community tensions and conflicts" to the point where "differences in cultural traditions instead of adding flavor and variety to our common citizenry might well be hardened into hostilities...." To have quelled the aspirations of Blacks in 1950 America in the name of a melting-pot ideology seems more than a little disingenuous, or self-deluded.

This is not to engage in "name-calling," which, as Charles Berezin says, is not productive. The real problem lies with an American culture that holds constant, as objective and neutral, standards of merit that are rooted in and serve to perpetuate an entrenched class structure, and that relegate persons of color to the very bottom of the hierarchy. Levin's opposition to affirmative action is based on the assumed objectivity of those standards; that assumption led us to charge him with assimilationism. Berezin calls for political unity on broader issues such as the role of the professions. (We would add the entire structure of American education.) We agree. Affirmative action is not a transformative solution—just a partial step that will be divisive so long as people remain wedded to the false ideology of equality of opportunity. □

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## EDITORIAL

*(Continued from p. 10)*

perfectly suited for such simmering—it can drag on for years, appearing to be a solution without actually forcing anyone to deal with the fundamental issue of self-determination for the Palestinians. Here Shamir's and Bush's interests overlap. It may be only in Bush's second term that the U.S. might seriously pressure Israel toward peace talks—and then only if enough American Jews are willing to support such an effort.

Meanwhile, facing Yom Kippur this year will be harder than ever. We have to deal not only with our own personal issues, but also with our collective responsibility for Israel and for the Jewish people in this second year of the Palestinian uprising. May you and yours be inscribed for a year of peace. □

## BLUE SKIES

*(Continued from p. 14)*

block. On the other hand, while my schoolmates had never learned Emerson's pretty rhyme ("Nor knowest thou what argument / Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent"), I knew what a kike was. Thus I went home, as commanded, from which sanctuary Arthur drove me to school in the Buick.

Once a year far-flung branches of the family gathered for the Passover Seder at my grandfather's house in Santa Monica, a time warp away from Bialystok. "Say, der!" we called it, gazing with some dismay at these strange, gawky relations, mole-covered, all thumbs. The only cousins who counted were Jimmy and Lizzie, who, since they were Julie's children, and because Julie and Phil—bald from their college days, two eggs in a carton, peas in a pod—were identical twins, were therefore my genetic half-brother and sister. Jim (later a starter at Stanford) and I made a point of throwing the football around the backyard and bowling over the pale kinfolk as if they were candlepins. During the ceremony itself, which droned on forever, Jim and I would sit at the far end of the table, arm wrestling amidst the lit candles, the bowls of hot soup, the plates of bitter herbs. The empty chair, we were told, the untouched glass of wine, were not for yet more distant cousins, missing in Europe, unheard from since the start of the war, but for Elijah, who was fed by ravens and departed the earth in a chariot of fire.

That was the extent of my religious knowledge. Not once had I set foot in a synagogue or been exposed to so much as a page of the Bible. I knew more about gospel music and Christmas hymns—

"Glo-or-i-a-a, or-or-i-a-a, or-or-i-a-a, oria!"—than I did about the songs concerning grasshoppers and boils that my relatives chanted while thrusting their fingers into the sweet red wine. Bar mitzvahed? Perish the thought! Yet the idea must have occurred to someone, because, for perhaps three weeks in a row, I found myself in a Sunday school class of glum Jews whose dogma was so reformed in nature as to hardly differ from that of Franklin and Jefferson and the other founders. About this trial I remember little. Bad food, for one thing. And a distinctly dubious rabbi. My fellow sufferers seemed unlikely to be interested either in the fortunes of the Hollywood Stars—not the film colony, but the town's Triple-A baseball franchise—or pup tent pleasures. Before I left, or, more likely, was asked to leave (the issue being my habit of roller-skating between the pews of the temple), I did pick up the fragment, the refrain, of one new song: "Zoom-golly-golly-golly"—so went the nonsense syllables—"Zoom-golly-golly!" Then I zoomed off myself, on my eight little wheels, back to the rhapsodies of secular life: "Sh'boom," and "Gee (Love That Girl)," by the Four Crows.

"I got ice cream! Every flavor! Chocolate! Coffee! Vanilla! Strawberry! Lamb chop!" That speech, from a little Cub Scout play, was the first line I can remember writing. I suppose it was in the cards that I would try my hand at the craft. Phil and Julie, unique among studio employees, did their writing at home. Once, Jack Warner cracked down on them, pointing out that their contract called for them to be at work on the lot by 9:00 A.M., just as bank presidents had to. "Then tell a bank president to finish the script," said one or the other of the twins, and drove off the premises. It wasn't long before Warner had another such fit, demanding that the boys, as they were habitually called, show up at the stipulated hour. They did, and at the end of the day they sent over the typescript. The next morning Warner called them in and began to shout about how this was the worst scene he'd read in his life. "How is this possible?" asked the first twin. Concluded the second, "It was written at nine." So it was that I'd often lie upstairs, on the carpet, outside the closed library door. From the other side I'd hear a muffled voice—maybe Julie's: "yattita-yattita-yattita," it would declaim, with rising inflection; then another voice, let's say Phil's, would respond, "yattita-yattita-yattita!" Then both would break out together, indistinguishably, in their crystal-shattering laugh. It seemed an attractive way to live one's life.

Still, I don't think I wrote a story until my first year at University High. What I remember, more than three-and-a-half decades later, is a public plaza, a milling crowd, a feeling of excitement, anticipation. There is, in the description of the square, the clothing, the mustachioed faces, something of a South American flavor. The snatches of dialogue, while not Spanish, are accented somehow. Buenos Aires, then. There is no real plot, only the waiting, the crush of numbers, the electric expectation. Finally, when the tension is as great as a fourteen-year-old can make it, that is, when all the upturned faces have turned in the direction of the tall brick building, when all eyes are focused upon the high balcony that juts out over the square, the closed doors of the palace open. A small figure, unprepossessing, clean-shaven save for his mustache, and dressed in plain uniform, moves into the open. A sudden hush falls over the crowd. The man, not young—sixty-three, in fact—steps forward. He leans over the balcony's wrought-iron rail. Then, suddenly, he stands upright and raises his right hand in the air. A great wave of sound, long suppressed, breaks from the crowd. It is half a sigh, half a shout. "*Viva!*" That is the cry. "*Viva,* Hitler!"

Where on earth, or at any rate in California, with its blue skies, from which the sun seemed to shine in winter at much the same angle it did in July, did this vision of evil incarnate come from? Had I, after all, noted something hidden, unspoken in those wartime films? Or heard a few whispered remarks around the Seder table? Or seen, in newspapers, a blurred early image of what would later become such familiar photos—bulldozers at work on piles of bodies; heaps of spectacles, sheared


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hair, shoes; wraithlike figures in striped pajamas; the lampshades, the ovens, the showers, the ditches? The answer is no. Rather, an answer of yes would be superfluous here. The truth is I had always known—in the same way that one knows, from childhood on, the laws of gravitation. What goes up must come down. From childhood? I might have been born with an innate grasp of the fate of the Jews. What a person learns later—the facts of physics, the formulas about the mass of objects and the square of their distance—only confirms what is carried within like the weight of his bones. Hints, hushings, inflections, a glance: these pass from Jew to Jew, and from child to child, by a kind of psychic osmosis. So it was that history passed molecule by molecule through the membrane that held me apart from my fellows, and apart from a world long suppressed, long denied.

My brother and I entered the fifties much as did the nation at large—in a kind of dumbstruck stupor. Ricky had already taken the measure of this world: he knew an illusion, a veil of maya, when he saw one. Hence he drew inward, toward the realm of the spirit. That is to say, he drifted yet further toward the East—specifically toward the gardens and incense clouds and priests of Vedanta. Ricky's sudden, and continuing, interest in karma—the way one's actions determine one's destiny in past and future incarnations, the hope of rebirth on a higher plane, the dream of final release from the endless round of being—was surely precipitated by the death of our father in 1952.

Even then we did not enter a synagogue. What rabbi could hope to match the vision of Nirvana preached by the followers of Vivekananda? Or compete with the scenes—Alec Guinness scrambling down the Eiffel Tower, clutching his ill-gotten gains—in the movie we attended instead of the funeral? A comedy, no less. There might be an echo, in our laughter that afternoon, of the afternoons at the Bruin. No death, to a child, is irrevocable. Cartoon critters pop up, living and breathing. Why not our father, in the guise of his identical twin? Retake. Double exposure. Remember, though, that at the end of *The Lavender Hill Mob* Guinness is punished for his thievery and led off in chains. The doctrine of karma is no less strict than the Hollywood Production Code. Our crime, those hours distracted, the glee, may yet lead to a lower form of existence—as Republicans, for instance, or reptiles—in the incarnation to come.

I cannot say whether Ricky was aware of the Holocaust, or, if he was, whether the knowledge had anything to do with his withdrawal. I do think that what little this country had discovered—in newsreels, mostly—about the destruction of the Jews of Europe, and the subsequent erasure of those same mental traces, may have had no small part to play in the symptoms of paranoia, the deep, dumb shock that characterized the decade. "How could these things happen in *Germany*?" it was always asked. "So clean. So enlightened. So civilized." Now we know better. It was the very modernity of German culture, its mastery of technology and of the means of mass communication, that made it, with its glorification of violence, its infatuation with death, not our century's aberration but its paradigm. Hence the chill that fell over the land. All the values of modern life had been given an ironic twist, a mocking echo. Belief in cleanliness? Here were bars of human soap. The quest for light? Here were lampshades of human skin. What we feared in the fifties was not only communism; it was ourselves.

*Speak for yourself!* Very well. After my quick start in my freshman year at high school, I too withdrew. That is to say, I did not write any more stories, or playlets, or imaginative prose of any kind until my undergraduate years in New Haven were drawing to a close. Why not? While the answer is complex, I think it fair to say that I was, unwittingly, willy-nilly, coming to a decision: when I was ready to write, it would be as a Jew; or, better, when I was a Jew, I would be ready to write. There was, however, a long way to go.

Among the newsreel pictures in my own mental gallery are shots of crowds dancing about piles of burning books and young, grinning soldiers cutting the beards of learned men. These images, together with what I soon would read about the music the Nazis banned from their concert halls and the paintings they mocked in their Exhibition of Degenerate Art, convinced me that the war against the Jews was in some measure a war against the nature of the Jewish mind. Absurd, I know, to claim that by exterminating the Jews the Germans were in fact attempting to eliminate Jewish art; but it is far from senseless to claim that the oppressors had come to identify the Jews with some quality of imagination, and in creating a world without one they were attempting to confirm that it was possible to live without the other.

In a sense the Third Reich had no choice. An aesthetic of Blood and Kitsch must, by its very nature, try to undo what is embodied in Abraham and Isaac: imaginative reenactment, the metaphorical power of words, the inseparable link between act and consequence, and the symbolic prohibition of human sacrifice. Specifically, what fascism repudiates in the ancient tale is the power of faith, the recognition of limits, and the trust in the word of God. Enter the Jews. It was they who took the greatest imaginative leap of all—that of comprehending, out of nothingness, an empty whirlwind, the glare of a

burning bush, the "I am that I am." In spite of much backsliding, in spite of having been warned by a jealous God (in a commandment they have rebelled against ever since) not to make likenesses, this people has continued that "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation" that Coleridge defined as the essence of imagination. In an age when such faith was no longer tenable, when the supreme fiction, *that we matter,* became a rebuke to the countervailing belief, *that everything is possible,* then those finite minds, with their dream of the infinite, had to be eliminated.

These are the thoughts, or half-thoughts, I entertain now. The lesson I drew at the time, however, was little more than the proven adage: hard to be a Jew. And dangerous, as well. Hence I joined the ranks of the silent, the stunned. Nonetheless, the ground beneath my feet was shifting. For one thing, I had wheels. The friends with whom I cruised Hollywood Boulevard in the latest model of the Buick turned out—to my surprise; no, to my shock—to have names like Alan and Robbie and David and Dick. Similarly, the books I was reading, and the stories in the *New Yorker,* were written by fellows like Norman and Saul and Bernard and, soon enough, Philip. Not to mention J. D. I saw new kinds of movies: *Night and Fog, The Diary of Anne Frank,* and, best of all, Renoir's *La Régle de Jeu.*

Still, beneath the calm surface much was in turmoil. The symptom was this: no matter what situation I found myself in, I moved to the verge, the very edge. More to the point, having already been thrown out of the Jewish temple, I proceeded to get myself banished from the citadels of Christendom. First was the Webb School, where I'd been sent, with several dozen other products of broken or unhappy homes, two years after my father's death. "With the cross of Jeee-suus"—these were the words I mouthed in compulsory chapel—"going on beeeforrre!"

"What's this?" asked one of the preppies, as the turnips were plopped on his plate.

"The week's profit," I said sweetly.

Gone. Rusticated. Dismissed. Expelled. In the land of the goyim, however, what is done may, through contrition, repentance, and a good deal of breast-beating, be undone. The suspension lasted only three days. Perhaps my goal was not so much to draw the wrath of the Christians as to bask in their forgiveness. Better a prodigal son than no son at all. A more likely explanation is that, at loose ends, in limbo, I was pushing myself toward becoming that marginal figure, the wise-cracking Jew.

Then the ground, or the scene, literally shifted. I went to college in the cold, cloudy East. My instructions from Uncle Julie were as follows: when in New Haven buy an overcoat at Fenn-Feinstein; when in New York, eat the free rolls at Ratner's. There I was, a freshman again, at Second Avenue and Fifth. My coat, three sizes too large, was reddish-brown, with hairs sticking out of the lining. On my head, a snappy hat. Round my neck a Lux et Veritas tie. After studying the menu I raised a finger to the waiter. "I'm not electric," he said, hobbling by. A quarter of an hour later a second old man shuffled over.

"What's this *ma-ma-li-ga*?" I inquired.

Said he: "Not for you."

Not for me was right. Not yet. It was still the era of the deaf and dumb.

One afternoon, toward the end of my junior year at Yale, I was standing on High Street when the mayor came out of Fenn-Feinstein and stepped into the barber shop next door. "What's the mayor doing?" asked my current straight man, as His Honor emerged from the doorway and moved toward the entrance to Barrie Shoes.

"Wednesday. 2:00 P.M.," I replied, not quite *sotto voce.* "Collection time."

We were, remember, still in the fifties. Thus, the next thing I knew I had been thrust up against the side of a car, told to hand over my wallet and be at the dean's office the next morning at ten. By eleven, I was no longer a Son of Eli. Historians may yet come to note that this injustice, together with the response it provoked, represented the true birth pangs of the counterculture. I did not, as demanded, return to California. I spent a pleasant fortnight in nearby Hamden, strolling to the campus each evening to be interviewed by various senior societies—Manuscript, Elihu, Scroll & Key. Meanwhile, enough of a flap had developed—beginning with mimeographed notes on bulletin boards and ending with an interesting call from the *New Haven Register*—to bring about my reinstatement. Thus did the balance of power between the student and administrative bodies begin to tip. Some years later, when I returned to the Yale Drama School, the quota had been abandoned, Bobby Seale was camped on the New Haven Green, and the knock on the Elihu door was answered by—her blouse unbuttoned, a babe at her breast—a coed. *Aprés moi, le déluge.*

Oxford, or "Oggsford," as my coreligionist Meyer Wolfsheim calls it in *The Great Gatsby,* proved a tougher nut to crack. What do you do with people who, when asked to pass the salt, say "Sorry!"? My boorish crowd used to hang out in the taverns and try, with comments on the weather and the bangers and the temperature of the beer, to drive the locals out. The low point (or pinnacle, depending) of this campaign occurred in the dining hall of my college, Merton (a place so stuck-in-the-mud that its library, as old as Bologna's, turned down the gift of T. S. Eliot's manuscripts because he was not yet dead).

Let me paint the scene. On the floor are a series of long tables, upon which sit pots of marmalade made from the very oranges Richard the Lion-hearted sent back from Seville. Huddled on long benches are the undergraduates, shoveling down peas and gruel. On a platform, perpendicular to the masses, the dons are drawn up at high table. The crystal, the flatware, shine. The chef, a Frenchman, has made a *poulet en papillote.* Even down in the pit, we can hear the puff of the little paper bags as they are punctured by the professors' tines. Time for the savory. The dons tilt back their heads, dangling asparagus spears over their open mouths. But what's this? A stir on the floor? Where the Americans sit? In the Jewry?

Indeed, at the moment, friend Fried, out of New Jersey, is about to be sconced. The *O.E.D.* says, "Sconce: At Oxford, a fine of a tankard of ale or the like, imposed by undergraduates on one of their number for some breach of customary rule when dining in hall." The first infraction, in 1650, was for "absence from prayers." Fried's folly, however, was making a serious remark, since the aforesaid rule forbade any conversation about one's studies, about politics, or about anything that might be construed as an idea. That left the girls at St. Hilda's and cricket. No sooner had Fried made his point about Marxist dialectics than a gleeful cackle broke out among the Brits. Instantly a waiter appeared, sporting the usual bloodshot cheeks and bushy mustache. In his arms he held the foaming chalice that untold numbers of Merton men—including, surely, the animated Eliot—had raised to their lips. Fried, deep in his argument, paid no mind. The ruddy waiter—in his white apron he looked like a kosher butcher—tapped him on the shoulder and held up, with a grin and a wink, the tankard. Fried whirled round.

"What am I supposed to do with this?" he asked, as if unaware that custom dictated he drink down the contents and order an equal portion for all those at table. "Shove it up your ass?"

Immense silence. Everything—the dons with their buttery spears, the students balancing peas on their knives, the thunderstruck waiter—was as frozen as the twelfth-century fly caught in the marmalade amber. Then, as if a howitzer had been fired, a sudden recoil. The students shrank away on every side, their hands to their mouths. "Oh!" they cried. "Oh, God!" Meanwhile Fried had turned back to his interlocutor, out of California, and together they resumed their argument about the merits of Marx and Freud, a sort of mental arm wrestling not much different from that at the end of the Seder table.

Clearly if Fried was not rusticated for this, I had my work cut out for me. To make a long story short, I found myself on the telephone with the head of my department, Dame Helen Gardner. I fear that in so many words I told her that she ought to deposit her Anglo-Saxon riddles and Middle English charms (how to get honey from honeybees, for example, or cows out of bogs) where my compatriot had suggested placing the tankard of ale. Then, having resigned the major, I packed my bags, determined to leave the university at the start of the next term.

The two best things about an Oxford education are the length of the vacations and the relative proximity of the Mediterranean Sea. I'd already been to Greece, Spain, Italy, and Southern France. Now, on a broken-down freighter, the *Athenai,* I chugged right across the greasy, gray waters. Easy enough in the lurching bowels of this vessel to imagine that you were your own grandparents, storm-tossed, debating whether it was permitted to survive on a scrap of pork. Never mind that this journey lasted only two days and that the welcoming landmark was not the Statue of Liberty but the golden dome of the Baha'i temple, high above the harbor of Haifa.

What happened to me in Israel was at once common enough and most bizarre. Instantaneously, virtually on the docks, the wall between myself and the world, that membrane, dissolved. Before my eyes hustled Jewish porters, policemen, soldiers, sharpies, and sellers of pretzels. Osmosis cannot take place, nor can one live on the margin, or be expelled, when there are Jews in solution inside and out. The idea I had grown up with—that the very word "Jew" was awesome, sacred, terrible, not to be thought of, never to be mentioned—became ludicrous on these shores swarming with the usual run of big shots and bums. What made Israel so appealing to many Jews like me (and so repugnant to the zealots of Crown Heights and Mea She'arim) was the promise of the ordinary, the prospect of the mundane. Only in the holy land could the Jews escape being a holy people.

The impact of that part of my trip (the fact that I now kept track of Sandy Koufax on his way to mowing down 269 of the goyim) was altogether banal. But there were stranger, eerier forces at work, and they involved the history of the Germans and Jews. Of course I visited the memorial at Yad Vashem and the smaller museum, with its cases of torn scrolls and striped pajamas, on Mount Zion. At the center of everything, dominating each day, was the spectacle of a well-guarded German, Eichmann, pleading for his life before a court of his former victims. What was odd about these things was that I saw them in the company of someone who belonged to the last generation of Germans to feel, if not guilt, then more than a twinge of shame. This was Katrin, an architect from Munich, whom I had met aboard the *Athenai.* The relationship was to last another four years.

Meanwhile, upon my return, fate had more tricks in store. My plans to leave Oxford were suddenly abandoned when Khrushchev put up the Berlin Wall. Waiting for me in England was a letter from my draft board stating that I would be inducted the moment I set foot on native soil. "Agriculture": that was the first degree-granting program listed in the University bulletin, which I'd dashed the mile to the Bodleian Library to read in only a little over the landmark 3:59.4 that Roger Bannister, my fellow Oxonian, had set a few years before. *Better boot camp,* I decided. *Better Berlin.* The Bulletin's second entry was "Anthropology." The wise guy set out to talk his way back into yet another institution of learning. "*Dip. Anthro. Oxon*" reads my laconic degree.

But it was the beast in man I studied while pretending to solve the kinship system among the Nuer. And it wasn't the wall in Berlin that occupied me, but the one the Berliners had erected in the streets of Warsaw. In brief, I spent my second year in Oxford reading everything I could about the Holocaust. And when I wasn't reading, I was writing. The subject at last was myself. This story, my first as an adult, was called "The Bad Jew," and in it the title character—a cool Californian, from Los Angeles, in fact, aloof from the faith of his fathers, unmoved by the traces of the Holocaust he sees about him—is nursed through an illness by two aged survivors. While recovering, he comes across a long letter from one child in a death camp to another. The key passage deals with the time the letter-writer, Jacob, gives way to despair and attempts to smother himself beneath a pile of dirt in Bergen-Belsen. He is foiled, first by the sensation of an earthworm moving up his leg, and then by the fear that the slightest movement on his part will crush that little creature. The right thing to do, he realizes, both for himself and for the Jews, is simply to wait. At this point a shift occurs in the tone of the story. The burden of irony, of detachment, is shifted from my alter ego to the survivor, the mother of the dead Jacob. The crisis takes place when, on a bus trip across the desert, she turns in disgust from a group of dark-skinned Sephardim and says to the hero, "*Schvartzes!* Look at them! *Schvartzes!*" The Angeleno, while no angel, is no longer the bad Jew.

I am going to close where I began, in the sunshine, by the Pacific. I owe this much to the city and those climes: if I had grown up there as a Jewish child, that is, if there had been nothing to search for, no vacuum to fill, I would never have become a Jewish adult. I returned immediately after completing my degree at Oxford to spend a year at UCLA. Ricky and I lived in an empty flat on Fountain Avenue. He burned his incense in one room; I wrote in another. The year sped quickly by. I was jogging with a friend, my old pal Alan, when the Cuban Missile Crisis was at its worst: no way to fast-talk my way out of that one. Koufax, I noted, was on his way to winning twenty-five and striking out 306. Marilyn Monroe died, and so did Pope John.

Adolph Eichmann, of course, had already been hanged. In the course of that year the work that affected me most was Hannah Arendt's account of his trial. What so angered her critics—her claim that the Jewish leadership in Europe had been so compromised, so woeful, that the Jews themselves would have been better off if they had had no self-government at all and had merely run—seemed to me then, as it does now, so obvious as to be almost a truism. How on earth could things have been worse? The second half of her thesis, concerning the banality of the *Obersturmbannfuehrer,* and of evil in general, was not welcome news either. Clearly her readers, Jews and gentiles, were more comfortable thinking of Eichmann and Himmler and Goebbels and the rest as either subhuman or superhuman—monsters, beasts, or psychopaths—and not as human beings much like themselves. What struck me most about her argument—that evil is a kind of thoughtlessness, a shallowness, an inability to realize what one is doing, a remoteness from reality, and, above all, a denial of one's connectedness to others—was how much wickedness resembles a defect, and perhaps a disease, of imagination.

That malady, whose symptom, a stunned silence, was as prevalent in the early sixties as in the fifties, could be healed only by the writers and poets whose special responsibility was to show the world what those plain men had done. As Arendt maintained, only those who have the imagination to recognize what they share with the force of evil—in her words, "the shame of being human ... the inescapable guilt of the human race"—can fight against it. And only that fight, that fearlessness, it seemed to me, could give meaning to the suffering of the Jewish people and, in that narrow sense, bring the millions of dead back to life.

Grandiose thoughts, granted. I cannot claim to have worked them through at the time. But it was partly under Arendt's spell that I spent the academic year writing a play. It doesn't take a prophet to guess the subject. An Ivy Leaguer, living abroad, first initial L., falls in love with a German heroine, first initial K. In spite of some humor ("An American Jew is someone who thinks a *shiksa* is an electric razor"), it was a tortured piece of work, haunted ("I have the feeling, when I think of Europe, of what happened here, that I ought to be dead") by the destruction of the Jews. Somehow, it won a large prize, the Samuel Goldwyn Award, and persuaded Yale to let me in yet again—this time to the School of Drama.

Here, if you so desire, is our Hollywood ending. The

award ceremony drew many loose ends together, completing a kind of cycle. Goldwyn (né Goldfish) was the producer of one of my father's last films. Uncle Julie was in the audience. So was his ten-year-old son, Philip, named for his identical twin. Jimmy and Liz, grown up, were in the auditorium, too. Alfred Hitchcock, for the Christians, gave a speech and handed over the prize. Thus did the film industry, which had played such a large role in making my childhood *Judenrein,* now bestow upon me—and for a play so Jewish it would make *Abie's Irish Rose* look like a crowd-pleaser at Oberammergau—its imprimatur.

Still, there were no happy endings. Katrin was in Munich, recovering from a recurrence of tuberculosis she had contracted during the war. I was already preparing for my trip East. Little did I know I would not return—at least not for more than a few days at a time—to the West Coast again. "Include me out": that is not just a wacky Goldwynism. It is a description, canny to the point of genius, of the lives that Jews lived on the screen, and beneath the white clouds and peacock blue of the painted sky. □

## MORNINGS AND MOURNING

*(Continued from p. 22)*

West Side, the Upper East Side, Brooklyn. I am proud.

Seven of us are the Seder Sisters, with whom I have celebrated a third Seder, the Feminist Seder, for the past twelve years. We are about to have our Bat Mitzvahs. There is *Ms.* editor Letty Cottin Pogrebin, dressed like a religious woman, filmmaker Lilly Rivlin, psychologist Phyllis Chesler, and artists Bea Kreloff and Edith Isaac-Rose. Michelle Landsberg, a respected Canadian journalist, is new to the group.

We are rich in therapists, lest our presence cause more than distraction. There is Lily Engler, a psychiatrist, and Arlene Richards, a psychotherapist. And my youngest daughter Nehama sits next to me, standing when I say *kaddish.* Bella Abzug phoned in her regrets. She had to go out of town. "Remember," she said, "that I said *kaddish* for *my* father." All those long years ago, the lone woman in the shul.

In the place where I have always been alone, they spill over onto the rows reserved for men, and the *mekhitza* doesn't cover them. The men have to sit within close range of women, and we have to *daven* together.

"Soon there'll be more of them than of us," one sourpuss complains, crowded on his bench.

We have a nice *kiddush* with lox afterward. The sourpuss eats plenty, and I hear another *davener* say nostalgically, "Remember the old days when there was herring, lox, bagels? And the women were serving us. Remember how nice it was?"

The *shamash* leaves smiling and carrying a little bag of leftovers, including a jar of herring, one of the four reasons to live.

### April 22

A crazy scene. One of the cabal blithely pulls the curtain closed. I say, "Only the rabbi touches the curtain."

Schlomo and others join in: "According to Jewish law, you don't even have a soul. We are responsible members of the congregation. You aren't even a person in the eyes of the shul. You aren't a member. You can't vote." (In the sixty-some years of the synagogue's existence women have never been allowed to become members.)

They're interrupting the *davening.* The reader is Ralph, a caring fellow in his thirties who has finished saying *kaddish* for a parent and is staying for the pleasure of the company. Today is no pleasure for him. His back is stiff, his *davening* distracted.

At the end of the service Ralph says to me, "Tomorrow you bring the scissors and I'll cut down the *mekhitza.*"

I bring sharp scissors the following morning, but Ralph's not there. I think to myself, Why do I wait for him to cut the strings? Why not do it myself? I leave after the service and determine to return the next morning and do the deed.

When I arrive the next morning, the *mekhitza* is lying crumpled on the floor, the strings hanging from the ceiling. The rod is broken, the curtain slashed; the debris is piled in the corner with Ralph's card upon it.

Our *shamash* is ill, so ninety-seven-year-old Rodney, the substitute, is there. He does not feel kindly toward me.

"Is this your work?" asks Rodney.

"No," I say, stunned.

"I did it," says Ralph. "I cut the strings, I broke the rod, I slashed the curtains, I put them over there in the corner, and I left my calling card on top."

Larry, the button man, comes in and raises an eyebrow.

"I did it," says Ralph. "I cut the strings, I broke the rod, I slashed the curtains, I put them over there in the corner."

Fred, too, comes in. He is in the middle of a joke but stops laughing when he sees the curtain is down. He looks at me.

"I did it," says Ralph. "I cut the strings, I broke the rod, I slashed the curtains, I put them over there in the corner."

Then the rabbi comes in, stops, covers his face.

I walk out of the shul with Ralph. "I couldn't come in yesterday," says Ralph. "I was so upset by the attack. I realized he was attacking you only because you were a woman." I wanted to say, *"Boker tov, Eliahu"* ("Good morning, Elijah").

## April 29

Our *shamash* is out, pneumonia. There is something missing in the morning, a crankiness, an orderliness, a sweetness.

## May 8

A new curtain is lying unassembled in the rabbi's office. It is a beige cheap thing.

I don't attend the minyan the next morning. I won't stand behind the curtain.

It shocks me to think how much energy, thought, time, even money, the synagogue has spent these past four months to keep one woman in her place.

## May 19

My beloved *shamash* has passed away. I hear there is going to be a service around the coffin in the shul.

"It's not allowed!" says the fanatical trio. "You can't have a body in the shul."

At noon the limousine parks in front of the shul. We gather. The coffin is a smooth, plain box which the elderly men carry with great difficulty through the door.

"We bring something sacred into the shul," says the rabbi. "This *shamash* was part of the shul for fifty years. He is like the ark. He has to be here so the very walls can weep."

The new *shamash* is my enemy, Rabbi Ornstein. He struts around, testing the pulleys on the curtain.

## May 22

I tell the rabbi I am leaving the shul, but he says, "I have made a scene on your behalf. I tell this fellow Ornstein, 'Call off your cohorts. Leave Esther alone.'"

"Esther is a *moredet,* a woman who casts off tradition," says Ornstein.

The rabbi becomes angry. "I will stand by the synagogue door. I will dismiss the service if you continue to harass her. You may be a *shamash,* but I have *yichus,* connection, through my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father—all Hasidic rabbis. You, Ornstein, know the teachings of my great-grandfather, the chief rabbi of Prmeshlam, and my grandfather, the rabbi of Zicsloiv, and my father of Noldwarno. I will call down curses from my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father if you don't leave this woman Esther alone."

Fred is standing there. "Darling," he says, "You can't ask for more than that."

"Come," says the rabbi. "Look at the new *mekhitza,* so modest, so neat."

I stand there looking. Fred tells another Miami-plus-God joke:


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A grandmother and her grandchild are at the beach in Miami. She is enjoying watching him with his little pail and shovel in the sand by the water, splashing and laughing in his little sunsuit and cap. Suddenly a great wave comes and washes away the baby.

"You do this to me!" the grandmother cries to the heavens. "To me, who always kept kosher and made holidays and was a good person."

There's a clap of thunder, and another wave washes ashore and there is the little grandchild. The woman feels him all over, looks up at heaven and says, "There was also a hat."

Is Fred saying that I'm not satisfied with being washed up on shore?

## June 2

I still won't obey the rules, and, toward summer, I receive a phone call from a young lawyer, active in the synagogue.

"You don't want to jeopardize the gains we're trying to make for women, do you?" he asks.

"What, exactly, are the gains for women?"

"Membership. It has a very good chance, unless you continue to alienate us."

"They'll vote against women becoming members because I won't stand behind the *mekhitza*?" I ask.

"It would certainly influence them," he says. "Everything could be lost."

"But everything is in the basement," I say. "Everything is in that little room, where I am every day hidden from view. That's where it is, and if you forget that, there's nothing you can do for women."

"If you're not satisfied with our policy . . ." he says.

I don't hang up on him. I turn the receiver down and wait until no sounds come from it before I put it back in the cradle.

I've been fired.

### JUNE 8

The rabbi comes to our loft. He has a plan:

"Your husband will be voted in as a member. Then Tuesday night the shul will vote for the first time in sixty years to give membership to women. For sure, you will be a member.

"Then, in September, you and your friends—remember Doris?—will attend a membership meeting, and you'll talk about the *mekhitza* and you'll talk in a sweet voice, like this"—his voice becomes high-pitched—"Ladies and gentlemen . . ."

"You could say that the *mekhitza* is a symbol and that it might as well be a bank of flowers. Would you agree to a bank of flowers?"

I agree, if it's not too high, too dense, if it's not the redwoods of California.

The rabbi becomes happy and begins singing a tune. *"Simkha G'dola"* he sings. "It's a new song, very big with the Hasidim." Happy Occasion.

He presses the button for the elevator, and I hear his cantorial voice as the elevator descends, *"Simkha G'dola."* □

*This piece is dedicated to my father, Paul Masserman.*

## THE BEAST

*(Continued from p. 38)*

lives was not altogether surprising.

Those of us who are willing to look are now finding culture in the lives of our more distant cousins in the animal world. Elephants, for example, communicate in ways we are only starting to comprehend—not just through touching and audible trumpeting, but also through infrasonic (low-frequency) calls that carry vast distances, and by way of pheromones and vomeronasal organs, a type of perception for which we have no descriptive word even though it is characteristic of many animal species.

Elephants have a complex social structure, with female-bonded groups at the center and a multi-tiered network of relationships radiating out from them, encompassing the whole population of an area. Ritualized greeting ceremonies express and cement bonds, and vary depending on relationship and length of separation. If a close family group is separated and then reunited, the greetings will be intense and excited—the elephants will run together, rumble, trumpet, scream, click tusks together, entwine trunks, flap ears, urinate, and defecate.

There is no single uniform "elephant": a matriarch who is irritable and tends to go off on her own is unlikely to maintain a closely knit group, but when bonding is close, family affection is intense. Consider the following report by Cynthia Moss, describing what happened when poachers shot Tina, a member of an elephant group Moss had been studying:

> The other elephants crowded around, reaching for her. Her knees started to buckle and she began to go down, but Teresia got on one side of her and Trista on the other and they both leaned in and held her up. [Soon, however,] blood gushed from her mouth and with a shudder she died.
>
> Teresia and Trista became frantic and knelt down and tried to lift her up . . . and Tallulah even went off and collected a trunkful of grass and tried to stuff it into her mouth. Finally, Teresia . . . straining with all her strength . . . began to lift her. When she got to a standing position with the full weight of Tina's head and front quarters on her tusks, there was a sharp cracking sound and Teresia dropped the carcass as her right tusk fell to the ground. She had broken it a few inches from the lip well into the nerve cavity. . . .
>
> They gave up then but did not leave. They stood around Tina's carcass, touching it gently with their trunks and feet. Because it was rocky and the ground was wet, there was no loose dirt; but they tried to dig into it with their feet and trunks and when they managed to get a little earth up they sprinkled it over the body. Trista, Tia, and some of the others went off and broke branches from the surrounding low bushes and brought them back and placed them on the carcass. They remained very alert to the sounds around them and kept smelling to the west, but they would not leave Tina. By nightfall they had nearly buried her with branches and earth. They then stood vigil over her for most of the night and only as dawn was approaching did they reluctantly begin to walk away, heading back toward the safety of the park. Teresia was the last to leave. The others had crossed to the ridge and stopped and rumbled gently. Teresia stood facing them with her back to her daughter. She reached behind her and gently felt the carcass with her hind foot repeatedly. The others rumbled again and very slowly, touching

the tip of her trunk to her broken tusk, Teresia moved off to join them.

To see such animals as a "different culture" seems directly in accord with the similar deprivileging move going on in contemporary anthropology. Traditionally anthropologists shied away from an emphasis on cultural particularity, fearing excessive contextuality, cultural relativism, and the absence of fixed boundaries. They chose instead to take refuge in analytic categories ("bloodless universals"), such as religion, marriage, property, or trade, which were explicitly or implicitly applied with reference to Western norms. More recently, anthropologists have been recognizing that culture is local, plastic, and utterly particular, best understood not through abstract analytic constructs but through a process that Clifford Geertz calls "thick description." This approach necessarily leads to the rejection of standard hierarchical orderings: for example, Western "civilized culture" contrasted with "primitive culture." Thus recovery of context has a leveling effect. It means that we are all "natives" now; the world must be seen as a place where, in the words of Michael Ignatieff, "difference has its home."

The recovery of context also means that the problem of anthropology (or ethology, or environmental ethics) is the problem of perception. How do we know the other? To deprivilege the claim that our instrumental rationality is the sole path to knowledge serves to underscore the variousness of perception itself: variety in the world is not just variety of "things out there" but variety of perceptual experience, of consciousness itself. Bees, for example, are structured so that they see broken surfaces and movement more easily than we; but they see stationary surfaces less well, and they see colors differently. What to us is a simple white flower is, to a bee, a light blue flower with shimmering, brilliant ultraviolet lines (nectar guides) pointing to the interior. Similarly, "What is it like to be a bat?" has now been posed as a serious philosophical question. Bats perceive the world through sonar: they correlate outgoing, high-frequency, subtly modulated shrieks with subsequent echoes. We can try to imagine hearing by sonar. We can also imagine, perhaps, having webbing on our arms, or flying about catching insects, or spending days lazily hanging upside down. Yet, at best, that would tell us what it would be like for one of *us* to be a bat, not what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat.

That we lack the words for a true phenomenology of bat experience is hardly surprising, since we also lack the words for a true phenomenology of the varieties of human experience. We know a great deal about human beings as objects of study; we know very little about how to get access to each other's inner lives. With respect to animals, insensitivity to the problem of perception all too easily distorts our observations. For example, as Barry Lopez points out, the male researchers who have dominated the study of wolves through field investigation have used almost paramilitary language to describe structures of hierarchy in wolf packs (where "lieutenant wolves" are "dispatched" and an individual wolf "pulls rank" on another). It is becoming evident, however, that wolf hierarchies are more fluid, shifting, and complex than once supposed. Similarly, rituals of "dominance" in baboon culture, once perceived in human terms as indicating a rigid hierarchical power structure, have now revealed themselves to be largely the behavior of insecure newcomers to an otherwise stable group. Success in dominance has, in the long run, little to do with access to material benefit.

So too our distorted perception colors our view of animal territoriality. Just as libertarian apologists for capitalism find Lockean property rights in any tribal culture that has a relationship with its things, wolf researchers have tended to see in "territory" something resembling our ownership of land, or even the boundaries between nation-states. For wolves, however, the importance of territory, the boundaries of which are not fixed but shifting, seems to lie in its relation to pack communication through scent marks. Scent marks within an area provide a kind of cognitive map for wolves, a sense of spatial organization; for by smell a wolf can tell where others in the pack have hunted successfully, or where they have traveled recently.

A somewhat different anthropomorphic tendency is to reject the mechanistic sterility of behaviorism only to adopt celebratory romanticism. We do wolves a great disservice when we describe them as embodying the true nobility we would like to find more often in human society, while we wish away aspects of wolf life that offend our liberal sensibilities. Wolves sometimes kill other wolves. They also kill young members of prey herds, not just the old and sick, with the choice of victim depending on a complex interplay of signals we cannot yet decipher. Despite the myths of environmentalists, wolves sometimes kill beyond their needs, and probably have killed unarmed people during periods of leanness, when taking human prey was worth the risk. The process of hunting is not especially attractive, for wolves run their prey to the point of bloody exhaustion, ripping at the flanks and abdomen, tearing at the nose and head. When the prey is lying on the ground, the wolves will bite open the abdominal cavity and start eating, sometimes before the animal is dead.

Romanticism carries risks far graver than an occasional pretty fantasy about the natural nobility of animals. The grotesque racism of the Nazis was part of a more



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general ideology that celebrated a spiritualized conception of nature. Early versions of Nazi anti-Semitism were based specifically on the fact that Jews, as city dwellers, had never been part of the rural German *Volk* tradition of closeness to natural forces. Early nazism represented a rejection of academic scientific rationalism, along with modern technology, and a quest for a more authentic spiritual connection to the natural world. In its most virulent form this ideology became the romanticization of precisely those aspects of nature with which liberals are least comfortable—nature's inexorable indifference to individual suffering, the genetic elimination of the least fit in favor of the strongest, and the seeming irrelevance of the "self" in the grand natural order of things.

The Greens, who in Germany today are trying to fashion a politics rooted in a more sensitive concern for the environment, are themselves plagued by the shadow of nazism. The challenge is to understand nature from a more ethically sensitive perspective than instrumental rationality offers, yet to do so without falling into the trap of romanticism. That challenge, in turn, has everything to do with the limits and possibilities of perception.

Other cultures may at least offer some guidance. With respect to wolves, for example, many Western scientists who, rightly, want to really *know* about wolves, to know their reality rather than some romantic image of them, go about their task with a peculiarly aggressive spirit, as if with enough radio collars and microscopes one could bind up the wolf in great lengths of statistical data. While much of that data is useful and informative, Western scientists still know less about wolves than do the Nunamiut people, who, living a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, share their lives with wolves. Both the Nunamiut and the wolves must depend on similar hunting techniques to survive, and both have learned to perceive the world in the same way, noting details and making sensory discriminations that would completely elude a Westerner. The Nunamiut, in other words, live in the same "time space" as wolves, and it is different from ours.

Although the Nunamiut's knowledge of wolves, as related by Barry Lopez, is much more detailed than ours, it is not complete; for Nunamiuts there is no single ultimate wolf reality, which is "not a thing to be anxious over." Thus the Eskimo's knowledge of wolves tends to be open-ended, having to do with variation and possibility rather than certainty, particularity rather than universality. Eskimos speak more often of individual wolves than of a collective "wolf":

> *Amaguk* [Wolf] may be a wolf with a family who hunts with more determination than a yearling wolf who has no family to feed. He may be an old wolf alone on the tundra, tossing a piece of caribou hide up in the air and running to catch it. He may be an ill-tempered wolf who always tries to kill trespassing wolves wandering in his territory. Or he may be a wolf who toys with a red-backed mouse in the morning and kills a moose in the afternoon.

Native Americans in general did not traditionally consider themselves apart from nature in the way we do; but that does not mean they refused to perceive difference. To perceive difference was not to constitute hierarchy. Just as there were "the People," so too were there "the Bears," "the Mice," and so forth. Animals were simply separate nations, each with particular qualities from which one could learn by paying respectful attention.

In contrast, given our entrenched ideologies, it is hard for us simply to *see* both similarity and differences without rushing to rankings and dualistic categories. The hold of conventional categories is so extraordinary that even Peter Singer and Tom Regan, two of the English-speaking scholars most visibly committed to animal rights advocacy, have argued wholly by reference to Western structures of analytic rationality—Benthamite utilitarianism and deontological libertarianism—as if a new formulation of cost-benefit analysis or a new clarification of Kantian membership criteria will solve what is ultimately a problem in the very nature of our perception. Perhaps for that reason it has been noted that the animal rights movement, with its individualistic emphasis, may be irrelevant, or counter to, a sound environmental ethics.

A first step toward formulating a more sensitive (even sensible) ethics must be, instead, a recovery of humility. We must disabuse ourselves of the cultural version of what Stephen Hawking has called the "strong anthropic principle"—the notion that we are so special that everything else must have assembled itself for the sake of producing us. In the case of other human cultures, our presumption has led to the obliteration of their difference. In 1938, when outsiders had their "first contact" with the fifty thousand previously unknown Papuans of western New Guinea, they discovered literally hundreds of separate cultures, each with its own language. Today anthropologists know of virtually no other human culture, anywhere on earth, that has been untouched by the industrialized West. The point here is not to romanticize any particular lost culture—some practiced self-mutilation, others cannibalism, others child abuse—but rather to recall that the dominant cultures triumphed in their evolutionary short-run for economic and military reasons, hardly qualities that readily correlate with virtue, happiness,

*Tikkun (tē•kün) . . .*
*to heal, repair and transform the world.*
*All the rest is commentary.*

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