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

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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1989 $5.00

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Peter Gabel

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Intifada

This morning after her second cup of coffee, finishing
the front page, she decides the future no longer
matters. What a relief. And the past too. Always
stepping into the next ruin, balancing on the next
ledge, making it crumble again. Ancient eroded
vineyards in the Judean hills. She can forget
what happened, all that pile-up of memory and guilt
like accidents on the bridge when the cars smash
into each other behind the first collision. We don't
have to hold our necks, she thinks with a sweet release,
or assess the damage or take notes from the other driver.
It doesn't matter, it doesn't. She keeps the news
to herself like a secret drinker, not able to give it up.
The boy with his leg blown off. The dutiful children.
What she is in her own eyes, the bulk of her fear.
Yesterday she had to decide between chocolate-orange
and mocha-pecan. The best ice cream in Tel Aviv
they told her. Decide. Decide. As if her life
were the life she'd chosen. As if anyone's life

—Shirley Kaufman

TIKKUN

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Letters

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

Joseph Campbell

To the Editor:

I am an admirer and critic of Joseph Campbell, so I was very interested when I saw that *Tikkun* (May/June 1989) had an article about Campbell that was written from a Jewish perspective. Like Frankiel, I find Campbell's own applications of his analysis to the Genesis stories (to which he largely confined himself among Hebrew writings) to be unsatisfactory and mostly revealing of Campbell's antipathies to the Jewish (and Christian) traditions.

Yet, I wish someone would apply to Torah and *agada* Campbell's concept of myths and legends as metaphors or models of the inward journeys each of us needs to make. That approach might have looked at the story of "*Lekh L'Khah,*" where God commands Abraham to leave his childhood home, as illustrative of the stories which, according to Campbell, help us to prepare ourselves psychologically for embarking on the journey of living independent lives — what Campbell sees as the beginning of the journey of the thousand-faced hero or heroine. In Campbell's approach, one aim of this quest is to directly experience the great unity. The obtaining of this goal is also well illustrated in Torah and *agada,* for example in Abraham's one-to-one relationship with God at the "*brit beyn hab'tarim*" (the covenant of the pieces), and in the declaration of the "*Sh'ma*" at Sinai after the Hebrew people have begun their journey from the land of bondage.

But Frankiel will not allow us to identify the "*Sh'ma*" with this aim of the hero's quest because of her disagreements with Campbell's theology, specifically his concept of transcendence. Campbell, like many of today's religious Jews, looks at the traditional concept of God (seen as a transcendent entity beyond all time and space) as a metaphor for that undefinable, inconceivable mystery of the universe which is the ineffable ground of all being.

For Frankiel, God's literal "supernatural" transcendence is fundamental. For her, the imagery of transcendence

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must be more than a metaphor because God "beyond" nature is the source of moral direction that is independent of human will and societal context.

I have two problems with this. First, Frankiel identifies her definition of divine transcendence as the only valid Jewish definition. Without amplification, I must reject such proprietary claims as to what is the one correct Jewish definition of transcendence or of God.

Second, Frankiel places too much emphasis on the particularities of Campbell's personal theology. It is the process that is more central. After all, what is the difference between what a Jew of Campbell's theology does and what a Jew of Frankiel's theology does when trying to determine the moral direction they will take in response to an ethical dilemma? Both will examine the situation, weigh the justices and injustices, consult the advice written down by their predecessors, and pay heed to the "still small voice" to which they will listen for guidance. Frankiel assumes the voice comes from a wisdom beyond all nature which speaks to us directly and through the writings handed down from our ancestors. Those of Campbell's theological leaning assume the voice and the writings come from the accumulated wisdom of nature and society that has been recorded and imbedded within us. Yet both have consulted and listened inward, and both emerge choosing correct or mistaken paths to follow. Both approaches have dangers. People who follow Frankiel's approach too literally assume that they are obeying what God has commanded them to obey and they risk not seeing their errors. Those taking Campbell's theology too far suffer risks inherent in a relativistic morality, suiting their ethics to the exigencies and fashions of the moment. Frankiel correctly cautions us against this danger on Campbell's path; however, she appears to assume that but one step on that path is sufficient to assure that the error will become unavoidable.

Many of us, especially after the Holocaust, can no longer lead spiritual lives founded on a concept of God as a supernatural omnipotent entity who literally intervenes in history when He or She so wills it. If we who feel this way are to find redemption and direction in adherence to our tradition, then we will seek ways to conceive the imagery of our ancestors in metaphoric terms. If we are confined to that imagery's literal meaning, we will have to cut ourselves off from Judaism as a spiritual wellspring.

David Cooper
Oakland, CA

To the Editor:

I must be a part of that "post-1960s movement of young Americans and Europeans toward a more universalistic, nature-oriented spirituality" that Ms. Frankiel mentions, for I have found myself less attracted to the Judaism in which I was raised and educated as a spiritual belief system. My work on the political Left in the last decade has left me convinced that purely secular movements are incapable of changing society in the ways I deem most desirable, yet I have not found in Judaism a viable alternative. How and why have many of us ended up feeling this way? Ms. Frankiel's article skirts this issue. We are left only with an "intellectual" critique of Eastern mythology which doesn't even begin to address the ways in which certain deeply felt emotional needs are apparently not being met by Judaism. Even if this critique is "correct" from a Jewish point of view, the question still remains: Why do so many of us raised in such a rich tradition turn to "foreign" belief systems?

I fear that many people in the Jewish establishment will immediately respond with all the easy answers: Campbell's view of religion, which Frankiel claims is essentially psychological, fits in perfectly with our age of narcissism and its therapeutic culture; it's just a way young people have found to express rebellion against their parents and society; it's a reflection of the general anti-Semitism in society; the New Age hucksters have made anything coming from the East seem fashionable and hip; they're all self-hating Jews anyway; and so on. There may be a grain of truth in all of these claims, yet something remains unexplored.

I think I can offer one additional explanation. I cannot avoid recognizing that my feelings toward Israel with regard to its treatment of the Palestinians constitute an important factor. It is extremely difficult, particularly for those of us who have not had strong affiliations with Jewish organizations for some time, and who don't observe Jewish ritual, to separate our

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feelings toward Israel from our feelings toward Judaism as a whole. The worst thing is that the Jewish establishment confirms us at every step in our sense that Israel and our Jewishness are inseparable.

In the multitude of articles in the mainstream Jewish press bemoaning assimilation and the various reasons for Jews leaving the flock, I've never seen this issue addressed except by *Tikkun*.

One would be a fool, and worse yet an ideologue, to suggest that the situation in Israel is the only reason that I have not re-explored my Jewish identity; it is, however, an important factor for myself and many of my friends. Maybe I'm being hopelessly naive, but I envision a great Jewish spiritual renewal sparked by an Israel that has agreed to live as a Semitic nation at peace among equals in the Middle East, fully committed to bringing together as no other country can the older traditions and cultures of the Third World with the vital modernism of the West. Israel is uniquely situated to perform this "New Age" task of bridging East and West. It is precisely in this sense that I still see us as the "chosen people."

I would not dream of suggesting that it is Israel's job to heal the wounds of the world, but in the absence of at least an attempt to create this universalistic conjoining which Israel potentially represents and seems to adamantly refuse, is it any wonder many of us turn to spiritual traditions that emphasize a "mythology for the whole planet"? In a world in which all problems appear to be global ones, why shouldn't we look for a spirituality that builds on a sense of these universal interconnections? Irving Howe notes in the same issue of *Tikkun* (May/June 1989) that "Israel" seems now to be the religion of American Jews; if this is so, why shouldn't many of us who hunger for some sort of transcendent spiritual tradition turn toward less idolatrous forms? I see our Jewish "leaders" spending more time, money, and overall energy defending Israel's policies than on developing and presenting Judaism as an attractive, valuable, and relevant religious practice. How could this produce anything other than a people who support Israel but have lost their Judaism? Is it any wonder many of us who would prefer to worship a god rather than a state look for other spiritual paths?

I note also in this regard that Frankiel chooses to identify Judaism with the "sociologically oriented" tradition allegedly criticized by Campbell. Certainly this is one of many Judaisms. The one in which I was raised, however, and the one which Israel seems to be on a mission to destroy, is the universalistic one.

The challenge faced by Israel of reconciliation with the Other is on a level with any of the great challenges posed by God to the Jewish people throughout history. Israel's bad-faith refusal to accept this challenge is a strong factor in my lack of interest in the Jewish religious tradition.

Rick Charnes
San Francisco, CA

Tamar Frankiel responds:

First, Mr. Cooper wishes to apply Campbell's theories to Judaism. Of course this can be done, and through such a lens we can perceive how Judaism partakes of the universal quest for the divine. But an important point of my essay was that crucial areas are thus left out—for example, transcendence, morality, and discipline—not only from Judaism but also from other traditions. And this fault is inherent in Campbell's basic assumptions, not merely a result of interpretive error.

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שמח
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Second, Mr. Cooper clearly understood the import of my critique of Campbell's concept of transcendence. Where Campbell uses the word metaphorically to mean the mystery of the universe, I take a "hard line" and insist that, yes, God acts in the world outside what we think of as "natural." Acknowledging this—with all its implications for the Holocaust and other evils—means accepting mystery in *its* literal sense: not just as a metaphor for wonder, but as the secret, hidden, truly impossible-to-accept side of God. And yes, it means accepting an authority other than one's own. Just today, when I accepted an uncomfortable rabbinic decision (on a minor but annoying point of personal life), I had no comfort or certainty from any inner voice. While I agree that wrong decisions may come from this path as well as from Campbell's, which relies far more on personal insight and will, my understanding of psychology and history, as well as the weight of my personal experience, tell me that relying on Torah wisdom has a far better chance of success.

But this turns us to Mr. Charnes's issue: If Jewish tradition is so wise, how did we end up with an Israel in which we are so disappointed? While the traditional "establishment" might reply that Israel hasn't been sufficiently guided by Torah, most non-Orthodox Jews would find that answer somewhat suspect. And it does seem that the universalistic consciousness espoused by Mr. Charnes is not much in evidence today.

Yet it was a Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Rav Abraham Isaac Kook (d. 1935),

who insisted that the yearning for universal fulfillment is essential to the Jewish soul, to Torah, and to religious Zionism. He also insisted, however, that we cannot achieve universality by leaping over the particular. Just as we cannot achieve love of mankind without learning to love our own families, so we cannot achieve planetary unity without affirming our unity with the Jewish people and tradition—including those parts of Us we can't imagine unity with. *Contra* Campbell, Judaism is not merely a "sociological" religion (here Mr. Charnes misunderstands me) but one with a universal message inside—as with all religions—a particular framework and way of life. How to express in our own lives our universality while being fully and consciously committed Jews is our great problem as a distinctive people in a world culture. We can be part of the solution only by struggling from *inside* Judaism, going deep within our tradition, to help our universal yearning emerge, lighting up the unique vessel which is our ancestral heritage.

Christian Anti-Semitism and Israel

To the Editor:

David Biale's review of our book, *The Wrath of Jonah,* which appeared in *Tikkun* (May/June 1989), is the unbalanced diatribe that he accuses us of making in our book. In a more sophisticated way it continues the pattern of labeling any criticism of Israel from non-Jews as anti-Semitism. If the author happens to have a long record of criticizing anti-Semitism and has written a major book to critique Christian anti-Semitism, then a new label appears: the author's previous philo-Semitism stands revealed as anti-Semitism also.

Nowhere in the book is it suggested that Jews have no right to a sovereign state. What is questioned, for Jews, Anglo-Saxons, or any other ethnic/religious group, is ethnically exclusive forms of nationalism that must negate the rights of other indigenous people living in the land.

A pluralistic nationalism that can accommodate all the people in the land, as people with full citizenship and human rights, is basic for just societies. One can accommodate that reality of ethnic and religious diversity in Israel/Palestine in two ways, either by reshaping the whole territory as a pluralist state or by a two-state solution, which must also accommodate minorities of the other group within its citizen community. Either way an ethnic-religious exclusivism must be overcome.

The claim that we have a hidden universalism that must negate Jewish nationalism fails to deal with this question of ethnically exclusive nationalism. But it also distorts our clear questioning of imperialist universalism. What is needed is neither ethnocentric nationalism nor imperialist universalism, but pluralism or a multi-particularity that can be mutually affirming. It is this pattern that we envision as the hope for just relations between ethnic-religious communities.

It is notable that Biale virtually ignores the structural injustice done to Palestinians by the creation of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. His only reference to the expulsion, which is the foundation of this injustice, is to dismiss out of hand the possibility that there was a "plan" by Ben-Gurion to expel the Palestinians in 1948. Four-and-a-half million Palestinians have been shaped by this experience of expulsion in one way or another. Any family can tell Mr. Biale the very coordinated way they or their relatives experienced their eviction from their villages and towns. To claim that this reflected no "plan" is, once again, to accept the cover-up as the reality.

Yeheskel Landau of *Oz V'Shalom*, in a recent response to me at a conference on peace-making in the Middle East, defined the authentic continuity between *The Wrath of Jonah* and *Faith and Fratricide.* He said, "Rosemary is very consistent. In the previous book she showed how anti-Semitism is the left hand of Christology, and here she has shown how anti-Palestinianism is the shadow side of Zionism." The position I affirm in both cases is one of mutual affirmation of particularity. What is needed is relations of shared power that will create neither victims nor victimizers.

Rosemary Ruether
Herman J. Ruether
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Evanston, IL

(Continued on p. 82)

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Publisher's Page

Nan Fink

In the publisher's page in the last issue (Sept./Oct. 1989) I wrote at length about *Tikkun*'s financial situation. It was a very difficult column for me to write. I didn't want to alarm our readers. Yet I wanted everyone to know in no uncertain terms that Michael Lerner and I could not continue to personally absorb the yearly financial deficit of the magazine and that we needed help. I tried to be clear about the seriousness of the situation, and I asked people to contribute money to continue the work of the magazine. The column had an urgent tone.

I am extremely pleased with the response to my appeal. We are receiving donations from many of our readers, and a large number of people are calling or writing to volunteer their help. The outpouring of support is very, very heartening and bodes well for the magazine's successful financial reorganization.

At this point I can comfortably say that it looks as though we are passing through and beyond our financial crisis. If the recent level of support continues, the magazine will flourish in the years ahead.

By speaking so honestly about *Tikkun*'s financial situation in the last issue I put the magazine in a vulnerable position. I assumed that most people would know that ventures such as *Tikkun* go through rough financial times and survive. I thought that these people would be optimistic about the magazine's future.

However, I was worried that some readers might misunderstand what I was saying. They might think that *Tikkun* was on the verge of immediate collapse. Instead of having faith that we would be able to find the money to continue the work of the magazine, they would cynically assume that the end was in sight.

Unfortunately, my fears proved to be true, at least in the Jewish press. Alarmist articles about the magazine have appeared around the country. I suppose it is to be expected, but it strikes me as odd that *Tikkun*'s financial situation is considered to be hot news.

After all, *Tikkun* isn't the first magazine that has switched from being personally-funded to being reader-funded. The deficits of several successful national magazines are currently absorbed by readership funds. It is not as though a magazine's demise is automatic because of a need to develop reader support.

With rumors flying about *Tikkun*'s financial situation, I've been concerned that some people might decide not to subscribe to the magazine because they are not sure what's going to happen. Since it is important for the health of the magazine to keep expanding our subscription base, it would hurt us a great deal to lose subscribers because of their fears of the magazine's collapse.

I'd appreciate it if you would pass along the word that the magazine is doing well in weathering its financial crisis. Also, please buy gift subscriptions for your family, your friends, and your colleagues, and encourage other people to subscribe to the magazine. This will help us continue to build our subscription base.

Tikkun is a healthy magazine. After three-plus years of existence, the number of subscriptions is growing at a steady pace, and distribution in bookstores and newsstands is up. Also, the community around the magazine is growing. Within the next year the magazine will sponsor three conferences (see the insert card for information about them). It would be a shame to lose the magazine's momentum because of panic about its financial base.

People often ask us why we don't put more advertising in the magazine. I understand their puzzlement: after all, if we want to increase our income it makes sense to find more advertisers.

Unfortunately, magazines such as *Tikkun* usually don't attract a large number of ads. If you leaf through copies of similar magazines, you can see that they have about as many ads per issue as we do.

One thing to keep in mind when looking over other magazines is that they sometimes include expensive-looking advertisements for which they are not paid. They do this to appear more upscale. (I learned about this through my contacts in publishing circles.) I'd rather use the space, myself, for words.

In any event, we have reorganized our advertising department and now have a staff person who is working to increase our advertising. We hope these changes will bring in additional revenue. But it is unrealistic to think that an increase in advertisements will make a large dent in our deficit. □

Editorials

America's Shame Continues

We enter yet another winter in which hundreds of thousands of Americans will be sleeping in the streets. They will be cold, sick, and often hungry. We will celebrate our holidays, toast each other, perhaps even fret over the situation slightly—and then turn our backs. The outrage will continue.

The Bush administration's plan to lower the capital gains tax seems particularly insensitive. Over the past ten years, tax cuts sponsored by the Right have eliminated much of the funding necessary to provide housing, employment, and support programs for the poor. The expansion of the economy that these tax cuts were supposed to have stimulated has not taken place. The poor have gotten poorer, and many have become homeless. Dozens of congressional Democrats, remembering all too well who helps finance their campaigns, jumped onto the bandwagon with the Republicans to cut these taxes, thereby making it likely that Congress will have to plead "no funds" when asked to help the homeless.

Faced with our silence and loss of the House vote, Congressional Democrats are now inclined to avoid "class conflict" issues. On the contrary, Democrats would do better if they were perceived as consistently championing working people's interests—particularly if they defined those interests not only economically but in terms of a progressive pro-family agenda and less stressful workplaces.

America has the resources to provide housing and jobs for most of those in the streets. That we do not do so is a testimony to massive callousness. The same quality of soul that lets us turn our backs on our fellow human beings lying in the streets inevitably manifests itself in our personal lives as well—the habit of not caring for our fellow human beings necessarily reflects itself in all our interactions.

When Congress saw that there was a savings and loan crisis looming on the horizon, it managed to find the money to spend $300 billion to ensure that the banks would not collapse. It did not insist, however, on taking control of these institutions so that the public could be compensated and so that savings and loan profits, now assured by public funds, could be directed to public purposes. And yet Congress is unable to find funds for the homeless. Only a massive outcry from the American people could change this. But too many of us remain silent, or assuage our guilt by giving small donations to relief organizations, instead of putting pressure on our political leaders to solve the problem.

Mubarak's Plan

Egypt has put forward an election plan that takes into account the needs of both Israel and the Palestinians. Taking Israeli fears into account, the plan does not call for Israel to start out with a clear statement committing itself to a Palestinian state, nor does it call for direct negotiations with the PLO. Speaking to Palestinians' needs, Mubarak's plan does call for Israel to acknowledge that negotiations would be based on the principle of land for peace (the same formula that made possible the peace with Egypt).

The Labor party has endorsed this proposal and so have we. Shamir and the PLO have not. Shamir's reasoning is obvious: he has never hidden his opposition to yielding a single inch of land even if he could thereby obtain a lasting peace for Israel. But the PLO? Sheer stupidity, once again.

Not that the election proposal would lead directly to the self-determination Palestinians rightly demand. Should he be forced into elections, Shamir would certainly find ways to derail negotiations once they were started. But the name of the game is this: Who will be left holding the hot potato? Who will be judged responsible for having prevented progress in this last round of political jockeying? If the PLO leaders had any sense, they would understand that it is very much in the interest of the Palestinian people for the PLO to be perceived as taking every reasonable step possible toward a negotiated settlement. Only if that perception is sustained over a period of several years will the Israeli peace movement have a chance to increase its power through the electoral arena.

Instead, the PLO has sent mixed signals that have made it easier to isolate it once again. The Fatah conference seemed to endorse a return to armed struggle—precisely the kind of meaningless posturing that can please a bunch of adolescent fantasizers. Such posturing has the cumulative effect in Israel of undermining trust, so that even when Israeli doves would like to move toward peace, they find that they have a hard time convincing the Israeli public that there really is a partner to negotiate with.

If our complaint about the Palestinians is that they often seem to prefer being "righteous" losers to winning their struggle for national self-determination (which would involve convincing middle-of-the-road Israelis that the PLO is serious about a lasting peace—precisely the opposite of the impression created by the Fatah

conference), our complaint about the Israeli government is that it persists in setting up every possible roadblock to peace. We can scold the Palestinians for their misguided tactics, but it is clearly the Israeli government that bears primary responsibility for stalling implementation of its own election plan. The bottom line is this: Likud is determined to block any plan that might lead to territorial concessions in exchange for peace. Now, almost two years after the outbreak of the intifada, with hundreds of Palestinians killed and thousands wounded and jailed, the Israeli government still has refused to acknowledge in principle that the Palestinian people have the same right to national self-determination that we Jews rightly claim for ourselves.

Labor, on the other hand, has been so compromised by its association with Likud's hardline positions, and is so weakened by its failure over the past few years to attempt to build popular support for an alternative perspective, that it now finds itself scared of losing the next round of elections (which would probably be called if Labor were to insist on a peace plan). Labor, therefore, finds itself forced to collude in Shamir's obstructionism, even while trying to give the impression that it opposes the Shamir policy. The Labor party might have felt that it would have had more leverage in an election had the Palestinians unequivocally stated their willingness to accept the Mubarak plan—and believing itself to have an electoral option might have given it more backbone and clarity in standing up to Shamir's rejection of the Mubarak plan.

It may be unfair to ask the PLO to act in ways that would strengthen the peace camp in Israel. But surely if the PLO wants to win and not simply to appear righteous before the world, then it might consider that it has some responsibility to not only *be in favor* of a peaceful resolution, but to *appear to be in favor* of peace in a way that might change the organization's image in Israel. After all, it was the PLO that helped create that image of itself as a force committed to destroying Israel in the first place. What more could it do? Stop talking about armed struggle against Israel.

If Palestinian leaders have not been smart in figuring out how to communicate their desire for peace and mutual tolerance so that middle-of-the-road Israelis would believe them, how about their propaganda cheerleaders in the U.S. who presented us with "Days of Rage"? Here was a perfect opportunity to present a balanced and reasonable account of the oppressive situation faced by Palestinians. The program could have dealt with the historical complexity of the problem, the splits within both the Israeli and the Palestinian camps, and the obvious need for a solution such as the demilitarized Palestinian state *Tikkun* has been advocating. Instead, the film's caricatured presentation of Israel allowed Jewish right-wingers to focus on the distortions in the film instead of forcing them and the American public to deal with the continuing pain and oppression of the Palestinian people. It is precisely this kind of one-sided propaganda that is shown to the rest of the world and shapes anti-Jewish and anti-Israel consciousness. No wonder, then, that many Israelis scorn world opinion when it is formed in this distorted way and do not trust that Palestinians seriously want to live in peace with a Jewish people whom they represent to the world as monsters. It would be in the Palestinians' best interest if their presentation of the current reality would incorporate some understanding of the legitimacy of Jewish claims. Then again, it would greatly strengthen the hands of moderate Palestinians if the Zionist movement could begin to incorporate some understanding of the legitimacy of Palestinian claims.

All the jockeying about the elections and who ends up with the hot potato in their hands ultimately seems irrelevant because neither side is yet willing to take the step necessary to say persuasively to the other side, "We get it; we understand the legitimacy of your claim." Until that happens, all the rest is simply a matter of public relations.

Gay Equality Should Not Be Delayed

Since 1986, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the rabbinic organization of the Reform movement, has been studying and studying the "lesbian and gay question," trying to decide whether openly lesbian and gay people can be accepted as rabbis within the movement. Last June, at its annual convention, the CCAR called for yet another study, including a "multi-year education program." They also decided to delay making a formal policy statement on the issue.

The rabbis are lagging behind the Reform movement's more courageous Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), which represents Reform congregation members. In 1987, the UAHC endorsed a resolution calling for the full integration of gay and lesbian Jews into all aspects of synagogue and communal life.

The arguments for caution being advanced in the CCAR are unconvincing. One argument is that homosexual rabbis might have trouble finding employment. Perhaps—but the best way to address this problem is for the CCAR to unequivocally support its gay and lesbian rabbis and insist on a nondiscrimination policy in its affiliated synagogues.

A second argument is based on some CCAR rabbis' worry that the decision to acknowledge gay or lesbian rabbis would jeopardize the Reform movement's rela-

tionship with other movements in Judaism and that these other movements would not recognize the ceremonies performed by homosexual rabbis. Wake up, CCAR rabbis—the rabbis who would be offended by this violation of Jewish law (halakha) already hold you in low regard for your rejection of other halakhic norms. One of the great things about Judaism is that it does not have any Pope or central authority figure recognized by all Jews. The Orthodox groups are usually so busy discrediting each other's halakhic decisions that they have little time to focus on what they might see as the latest outrage perpetrated by the Reform movement.

But at least those who take halakha seriously have some textual basis on which to hang their failure to give homosexuals equal treatment (though Rabbi Brad Artson has demonstrated in these pages that a persuasive halakhic argument can be constructed to support equality for lesbians and gays). We believe that the halakhic objectors are misguided, but at least they are not blatantly hypocritical. The Reform movement, after all, does not adhere to halakha. Certainly the movement didn't let worries about the reactions of other branches of Judaism get in the way when it came to eliminating halakhic requirements for Shabbat and kashrut, two areas more central to Judaism than restrictions on specific homosexual practices.

We at *Tikkun* have great respect for the way that the Reform movement has often led the way in the struggle for social justice. We hope that synagogue members will urge their rabbis to take swift action to welcome gays and lesbians to participate fully in the Jewish community.

Editor's Notes

• The anti-Semitism shown by Cardinal Jozef Glemp during the convent controversy is part of a larger pattern of anti-Semitism that permeates not only Poland but most Eastern European societies. The United States media, in its zeal to support any anti-Communist movement that might cause problems for the Soviet Union, has lionized nationalist movements in the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania whose anti-Semitic roots are well known to any Jew who has lived in Eastern Europe. Solidarity has had leaders who understand this problem, but has done little to systematically educate its own followers about the dynamics of anti-Semitism and how they were fostered by the church and by Polish nationalists. Nationalist movements in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and the Ukraine have been accompanied by an increase in anti-Semitism. These movements are already undermining Gorbachev's authority and making a return to power of hardline elements more likely in the Soviet Union, so the U.S. shouldn't be helping them anyway. But certainly economic, political, or moral support should be withheld until these nationalist movements, so closely allied with the fascists before and during World War II, have systematically purged themselves of all anti-Semitic elements and educated their followers about ways in which these movements are responsible for atrocities carried out against the Jews during the Nazi invasion.

• The cynical arguments advanced by the U.S. in support of a plan to sell advanced tanks to Saudi Arabia, one of the world's most flagrant violators of human rights, should show Israel's friends in the U.S. how destructive the continuation of the occupation really is. We unequivocally oppose the arms sale. We fear that those tanks may one day be turned against our friends and relatives in Israel. The Israeli government, however, has been forced to be cautious about how much energy it puts into opposing the sale, thinking that it needs to save its political capital in the U.S. for the defense of the occupied territories. The irony: in its effort to defend an untenable, self-destructive, and immoral occupation, Israel may be trading away its future military security. Congress should block the Saudi arms sale; meanwhile, American Jews should do more to communicate to the people of Israel how politically costly the occupation has become.

• The *Utne Reader* has established a set of awards for "the alternative media" (a category that includes everything from the *New Republic* and *Harper's* to the *Nation* and the *Village Voice*). We are pleased to have been chosen as the recipient of the award for the magazine with the best essays in 1988–89. Please share this information with your friends—it's dramatic evidence that "you don't have to be Jewish to read and love *Tikkun*."□

On Passionate Reason: Transcending Marxism and Deconstruction

Peter Gabel

In the current historical period, progressive forces in the United States and actually throughout the world find themselves without any coherent vision that could articulate either what is wrong with the way things are or what kind of world we want to bring into being. We are caught between two points of view, both

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of which are inadequate to grasp the true problems of social existence. One point of view I will simply call Marxism, which is the most developed form of progressive thought to emerge from the "objectivity"—the separation of passion and reason, and the separation of subject and object—characteristic of the Enlightenment. The problem with Marxism is not simply that it "hasn't worked," but that it was always based on a mistaken and overly objectified view of the nature of human desire and need itself. Its tendency to explain social phenomena by reference to economic dynamics, however plausible in light of the brute facts of nineteenth-century life and the mystifications that justified the economic oppression characteristic of feudalism and earlier forms of society, reflected a positivism that eclipsed the most distinctively social aspect of existence itself—namely, the desire of every living being to be recognized and confirmed by others and the attendant desire to create a vital world of social meaning and purpose based upon this social connection. Marxism was "smart" in the sense that it could plausibly correlate actual social and historical processes with apparently "objective" processes beyond the will or conscious control of any human being or group of human beings. It nevertheless misunderstood this very correlation, failing to see that it was social alienation, an alienation and distortion of social desire, that underlay the very "objective" and involuntary character of economic dynamics or of the so-called economic system itself.

There has as yet been no theoretical account of this social alienation that has gone beyond the psychoanalytic theory of the family and enabled us to understand the social-psychological dynamics that actually constitute and reproduce large-scale social processes and institutions. The legacy of Marxism still dominates progressive thought. People on the Left still talk primarily in economic terms about the nature of and solution to fundamental social problems because they do not yet have any other way to talk. As a result, conservative forces, which have a better instinctive understanding of the centrality of social connection and meaning to people's lives, have gained ascendancy in the West through their affirmation of religion, the "free" world and market, and traditional family values; and through appeals to the imaginary or "substitute" social connection symbolized by, for example, the flag. This conservative ascendancy cannot be effectively challenged by the Left's prevailing economistic worldview, because that worldview simply fails to address the desire for a community of meaning that is the very heart of the Right's message. As we have been arguing in *Tikkun,* you can't fight the passionate appeal of the conservative vision with a laundry list of economic programs.

The failure of progressive forces to develop a social theory based on an understanding of alienation can be traced in part to the effects of the second point of view currently enveloping the Left—the one associated with post-structuralism and deconstruction, with the work of Derrida and Foucault and their followers. This point of view has reacted against the horrors associated with Marxism and other totalizing social theories by rejecting the project of social theory altogether. Post-structuralists find in such theories an intrinsic tendency toward domination (Foucault's famous link between Power and Knowledge), which makes social theory itself part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

The post-structuralist line of criticism has many virtues, including its modesty, its emphasis on pluralism and "different voices," its emphasis on the importance of particularity and context in interpreting the meaning of social phenomena, and its capacity to disarm the sort of Big Theorizing that has been used for centuries to oppress and to justify the oppression of women and minorities. Yet, ironically, post-structuralist criticism remains as dependent upon the limitations of the Enlightenment as the type of social theory it criticizes. The specific error of post-structuralism is that it unjustly equates social theory with the explanatory conceptual schemes that have followed upon the rationalistic project of the Enlightenment; then it declares these grand conceptual schemes to be false on their own terms as well as socially repressive (Derrida's attack on "phallologocentrism"); and, finally, it rejects *any* universalist theory of social interpretation that could tie disparate social phenomena together and help make the problems of the world intelligible as a whole to people. The post-structuralists do not allow for the possibility that there is a kind of reason and general knowledge that can emerge from passionate understanding, and that this kind of reason is precisely what is needed for the illumination of the meaning of social phenomena expressive of the movement of social desire.

The post-structuralist "ban" on social theory has weakened the Left's ability to develop a moral critique of the existing society and to articulate a compelling vision of the kind of society we want to create. The goal of both philosophy and social theory traditionally has been to establish a true link between being and knowledge, or to make what is as yet unrevealed to consciousness about the meaning of its own existence accessible to critical reflection. For those who have sought to transform the world in a more emancipatory and humane direction, this intellectual activity was meant to provide people with a common reflective knowledge that could, through the experience of shared insight, inspire people to act to change things. The current left-wing academic and intellectual climate

in the United States, increasingly influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction, is impeding the continuation of this project by making a fetish of the notion of "different voices," by failing to tie the particularistic knowledge it values so highly to any common, general insight into the truth of social life *as a whole.* The goal of wrenching away the distinctive experience of women and minorities from the oppressive, universalizing categories of the dominant culture has certainly been a laudable one. But the denial, in the name of cultural uniqueness, that there is any way to reunite and illuminate the meaning of these diverse experiences through the development of a more supple and experiential social theory grounded in our common humanity makes it difficult for us to challenge the Allan Blooms and William Bennetts of our society. The effect of essentializing our differences and, therefore, of relativizing social knowledge has been to leave progressive forces open to conservative and neoconservative charges of "nihilism." It deprives us of any common intellectual language with which we might criticize the existing society as a whole, or discover our common social objectives.

The methodology that would take us beyond Marxism and deconstruction must involve an explicit attempt to overcome the separation of passion and reason characteristic of Enlightenment "objectivity" as well as what might be called the irrationalism implicit in the post-structuralist rejection of the possibility of social theory altogether. It must be a method based on what I earlier called "passionate understanding;" its epistemology has its roots in the phenomenological tradition of philosophy—in the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre—and is implicit in much recent feminist writing. Such a method proceeds on the assumption that all human reality shares a common ground and is expressive of a common social being, even though this common reality is manifested in a potentially infinite number of distinct and unique social forms; that every person has the capacity (under supportive social circumstances) to transcend the particularity of cultural conditioning so as to understand, on the basis of one's own being, the meaning of the experience of others; and, finally, that the validity of this understanding is based not on any logical "proof" characteristic of detached scientific analysis, but on the persuasiveness of one's evocative and critical "comprehension" of the phenomena that one is describing.

This way of linking being and knowledge has really always been at the heart of the true elements in psychoanalytic thought, although in Freud's day it was dressed up in a sort of metaphorical scientific vocabulary. Today, there are few psychoanalytic writers who do not, at least implicitly, acknowledge the centrality of engaged, intuitive comprehension to the construction of psychoanalytic knowledge. But this point of view has yet to really make its way into critical social theory, in part because the tradition of philosophical phenomenology (with the exception of Sartre) consists largely of individualistic introspection by abstruse German and French thinkers whom almost no one understands. The kind of critical social thought that I'm talking about here demands that people passionately throw themselves forward into the lived experience of the social phenomena that surround them and attempt to illuminate through evocative description, rather than detached analysis or "explanation," the universal realizations and distortions of social desire that these diverse phenomena share across the cultural richness of their differences.

To some extent, we have been trying to develop this kind of thinking in *Tikkun,* and we will do so more forcefully in issues to come. But one central point about the link between this new social theory and politics can be stated directly: transcendent social knowledge can emerge only from transcendent social experience. True social change can occur only through the building of social movements that allow us to recover our awareness of the desire for mutual confirmation and to gain the confidence that this desire also exists in the heart of the other. This implies a rejection of the simplistic notion of "revolution," although not of the radicalism that the notion of revolution has traditionally symbolized. Instead, we should think of social movements as more or less spontaneous outbreaks of social desire which must become vehicles for the gradual building of a true historical confidence in the possibility of genuine reciprocity. The success of any such effort requires an awareness that this process of confidence-building will be continually undermined by the history of our alienation and mutual distrust. True social change requires a kind of collective strength and compassion that progressive forces have yet to demonstrate in the social movements that have arisen thus far, and it requires the building of forms of culture that enable us to internalize the conviction that the kind of change I am speaking of really can occur beyond exhilarating outbursts like the sixties. Not to knock such exhilarating outbursts—in the face of the media's "nostalgia" idiocy and the many other anxious public attempts to suppress our memory of what we can still become, it is important to affirm the silent knowledge shared by millions of us that the sixties were among the most wonderful times that have blessed our existence together on this earth. It is only by retaining our memory of that experience, as well as other perhaps more partial ones like it, that the kind of expressive theory I am speaking for can come into being and allow us to communicate about how to move forward. □

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Crossing the Street in Chile

Ariel Dorfman

On the dawn of March 22, 1980, in a plane somewhere over the Pacific Ocean, General Augusto Pinochet, the de facto ruler of Chile, felt for a moment that his worst nightmare had come true; for the first time in the seven-and-a-half years since his orchestration of the bloody coup and overthrow of socialist Salvador Allende's constitutional government, Pinochet was convinced that he had lost power.

That 1980 trip, to the Philippines, of all places, had been planned to prove triumphantly to a skeptical world that the General was not an international pariah. Perhaps as important, it was to be an occasion when his wife Lucia could finally display a series of lavish robes that had, alas, gone unworn in previous forays abroad. She had been unable to dress up on Pinochet's visit to Spain for the exequies of Francisco Franco in 1976 because, as soon as the funeral was over, the emissaries of the soon-to-be King Juan Carlos discreetly informed the Chilean dictator that they would rather he not linger on for the coronation. Uninvited abroad except by fellow strongmen in Paraguay and Uruguay, and undecorated except by South Africa and Haiti, in 1979 the General had hastily flown to Washington to participate in the signing of the Panama Canal treaties. There he found every other Latin American president scrambling away from him, anxious to avoid a handshake that some embarrassing camera might immortalize.

The official visit to Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos was to prove even less fortunate. It was cancelled in mid-flight—due to pressure, it turned out, from Jimmy Carter. But General Pinochet, who did not know this, jumped to the conclusion that the Chilean army had toppled him in his absence. During the long minutes before Pinochet was able to reassure himself by talking to his loyal generals back home, he experienced what I conjecture must have been a bitter sense of defeat and exile, homeless on an airplane in the middle of the widest ocean in the world. It is safe to assume that he never forgot that chilling hour—not only because he has never since strayed from Chile, but because, more significantly, a few months after his return he rammed down the throats of the citizens a constitution that guaranteed (or so he presumed) that he would continue to rule his country in perpetuity.

In the original draft of that constitution, Pinochet had bestowed upon himself sixteen consecutive years as ruler of Chile. His advisers suggested, however, that in order to give the appearance of democratic intent, he divide the period in half: after his first eight years of uncontested preeminence, he would easily win an additional eight years as constitutional president in a plebiscite in which he'd be the sole candidate. Even if the enduring terror did not cow the citizens, even if the monopoly over television and other major media did not brainwash them, the government would still have complete control. Pinochet maintained power over the armed forces, the state apparatus, and each phase of the electoral process itself, from the enrollment of the citizens and the political parties to the counting of the ballots. There is some ironic satisfaction in the fact that Pinochet, like many an autocrat blinded by the thrall of absolute power, was unable to conceive that the everyday men and women of Chile might gather the courage to vote against him; but he also could not imagine—if the people dared vote so—that the hitherto fractious and squabbling opposition might be strong and united enough to thwart his attempts at stealing the election through fraud, or at invalidating the results through a coup.

And yet, on October 5, 1988, almost 55 percent of Chile's electorate voted not to prolong Pinochet's rule—opening the way for the General to watch a remarkable version of his Pacific Ocean nightmare inexorably creep up on him: he had become the first lame-duck dictator in history. Despite desperate efforts to avoid such a moment, on March 11, 1990, exactly sixteen-and-a-half years after he overthrew Allende, Pinochet will have to give up the presidency to the man who will win the free elections being held this December, in all probability the opposition candidate, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin. The General did not resign and has continued to make life miserable for most Chileans, but the mere perception that he is on his way out erodes his power daily. It has also changed the psychological climate of the country from the pervasive depression one habitually found in Chile to a quiet, vigilant euphoria.

Worse still for Pinochet, the left-wingers whom he had vowed to purge from the soil—and indeed the

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memory—of the country are flourishing. Although undoubtedly weakened by the repression and defeat of these years (no one believes that they can collect, now or in the near future, 45 percent of the popular vote, as they did in the last parliamentary elections in 1973), vast sectors of the Allende coalition are readying themselves to govern again with Aylwin—who was one of Allende's main opponents and who originally promoted and welcomed the coup. It is this bringing together of old antagonists in the Concertación Democrática, a coalition of center parties allied to the socialists, which symbolizes Pinochet's failure. It heralds an eventual deep realignment in Chilean politics, an end to the disastrous split between the Christian Democrats and the Left which had made the military takeover possible in the first place. Even though it remains to be seen if the tensions in this coalition will not tear Aylwin's government apart—and what role the powerful Communist party, excluded from the Concertación but working and voting for Aylwin, will play—there can be no doubt that Chile has, for the first time in many decades, a chance to establish a permanent and stable governing majority for the country.

I found on each visit to my country a bizarre source of hope in this persistent jaywalking.

Consider, for example, how the Concertación has negotiated essential modifications in the 1980 constitution. The original constitution was designed to allow Pinochet, even if he were eventually to be rejected in the plebiscite, to keep a stranglehold over Chile's future. In spite of the General's oath that not a word of that text "would ever be changed," the armed forces demanded that Pinochet call another plebiscite. Held last July 30, this second plebiscite approved substantial changes, among them the legalization of Marxist parties and the removal of obstacles to further alterations in the constitution. The Concertación's fundamental partner in this negotiation was the main right-wing party, Renovación Nacional, which is preparing for the day when the dictator will no longer be around. Pinochet has responded to this distancing by forcing Renovación Nacional—basically through humiliating financial pressure—to accept his candidate for president, the charismatic and young former finance minister Hernán Büchi; but it is expected that when the new Congress consents, Aylwin will enjoy the backing of those who once supported the General but are now eager to show independence. Aylwin has also stated that his first act in office will be to ask Pinochet, who has announced that he will stay on for another eight years as commander-in-chief of the army, to resign.

Is this the end of our dictator? Will he be able to cling onto this last military bastion, and from there effectively curtail the country's democratization? Will he threaten a new coup if the Concertación people get out of hand as they try to meet the demands of a long-thwarted populace? What if the people dare judge the military for human rights violations? What if they try to redistribute too drastically some of the colossal wealth accumulated by Chile's ruling class in these unbridled years?

In order to understand what chances democracy has, and with what resources it might be established, one must first ask how it was that the unarmed people of Chile were able—almost miraculously—to get rid of an omnipotent tyrant who had his country's entire military force at his disposal all these years. How did they do it?

The answer may be in the streets of Chile—or, to be more precise, in the peculiar way in which we Chileans, with or without Pinochet, with or without democracy, continue to cross the streets of our cities.

* * *

Chile has always been a nation of incorrigible jaywalkers. Oblivious to approaching cars, Chileans of all sizes, sorts, and classes will perpetually dart across the street from the middle of the block—five-year-old mendicant urchins, well-dressed grandmothers pushing baby carriages, even blind men with white canes tapping, apparently confident of their own immortality—all oblivious to the avalanche of cars roaring toward them.

Returning to Chile in 1983 after ten years of banishment, I was gladdened by this exasperating custom—even comforted by it. One of my most deep-seated fears—like that of so many exiles—had been that the torture and despair of that decade would have altered my country beyond recognition, that Pinochet would have contaminated even the songs of the birds, the taste of the bread, the way people told jokes. Like so many other exiles, I was worried that there would be no home to return to. Among the many signs of continuity, the one I had least expected was revealed to me in the streets of Santiago. While for years I had stood patiently at foreign intersections waiting for a red light to change to a distant green, back here the people of my country kept stubbornly ignoring the traffic signals and regulations as if time—and exile—had not passed.

During the years of protests and endless repression that followed, years of murdered friends and an adamant Pinochet, I found on each visit to my country a bizarre source of hope in this persistent jaywalking. If we had

involuntarily adhered to that habit in the midst of such a ferocious dictatorship, why couldn't we draw upon the deeper habits of liberty, tolerance, and participatory politics that had characterized our nation for most of its history and had made us a democratic exception in Latin America? And weren't those very traits the ones people were expressing when they strode abruptly into the middle of the street, sure that the drivers, instead of running them over, would brake, weave around them, maneuver so as not to hurt them, eventually stop without so much as an insult before proceeding on their way? (Try that in Rio or New York or Amsterdam!) Could it not be that the people of Chile were reminding themselves of the sort of country they had once inhabited, the sort of country Chile still might become—a country where you talk to, rather than demolish, the person in your path; a country where public space is defined more by a sense of shared community than by aggressiveness?

This does not mean that pre-Pinochet Chile was paradise. Throughout our history, we have been poor, exploited, and dependent. Millions of Chileans have been ill-fed, unhoused, and undereducated. And we have had our sad share of massacres when groups of the dispossessed took over land or went out on a strike. But the general trend of our nation was toward increased participation, greater consensus, and the dream of a more perfect future. We had a parliament where all political movements were represented, the freest press in the hemisphere, a belief in the sovereignty of the people, and—supposedly—an army that was subordinated to a government freely elected by the people. It was not surprising, therefore, that in 1970 we became the first nation in the world to attempt a democratic revolution.

That this experiment known as the Chilean road to socialism lasted only from 1970 to 1973 and ended violently might suggest that there were limits to what those at the wheel of the larger world economy were prepared to tolerate from the people in the streets, even if we were going about our radical economic and social reform in a peaceful and democratic way. Nevertheless, it would seem that the everyday customs of a people die hard: when a soldier like Pinochet took over the wheel of the country and began not only running over pedestrians but ravishing them, the victims' *campañeros* did not automatically decide to blow up his vehicle. Thirteen years were to go by, in fact, before there was an attempt on the dictator's life by an armed wing of the Communist party. And even the Communists' commitment to armed struggle, first stated in 1980 and implemented from 1985 onward, was half-hearted. That commitment isolated them from the rest of the opposition and has gradually been repudiated by most of the party. The central strategy Chile used against Pinochet during all these lawless years had been resolutely non-

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violent: the goal was to take over the public thoroughfare inch by inch, in the expectation that—defying the murderous traffic and paying a high cost in broken lives and limbs—Chileans would be able to grind the offending vehicle to a halt and force the hijacker of the car to hand over the ignition key.

Like all nonviolent resistance, the Chilean version had to meet two interrelated conditions in order to succeed. First, dissident agitation had to be massive. Only if vast groups of people were willing to risk their own lives (and what is often more difficult, risk the petty persecution with which a dictatorship makes everyday life into hell—the loss of employment, the children harassed in school, the obscene phone calls at two in the morning, the swastika cut into the breasts of a maiden aunt) would such a social movement stand a chance. To build a second country in the shadow of the dictatorship, or next to it, thousands of men and women had to expose themselves daily. The Chilean opposition took over the surface of the country; they unspectacularly took it back from Pinochet. They went up to the line of what was permissible, moved that line slightly forward, and then stood their ground. When they were mowed down, they found others to take up the cause and keep inching onward. This meant, in less metaphoric terms, developing innumerable trade unions, student associations, athletic clubs, cultural clubs, publications, women's groups, self-help groups, soup kitchens, and parallel universities. These groups were barely tolerated and often ruthlessly suppressed. They flickered in and out of the public glare, but eventually established their tentative right to exist through sheer pushiness, pluck, and craftiness.

The creation of an alternative press in Chile is a case in point. All our major current dissident publications originated under strange circumstances. *APSI* magazine began in 1976 as a bulletin sold by subscription only. It had permission to circulate restrictedly as long as it informed solely on foreign issues. Year by year, the editors expanded the scope of their publication: they unobtrusively transferred the magazine to newsstands; they began to talk—at first timidly—about national affairs; they developed a publishing house and a satirical supplement. But there was a price to pay for this encroachment. The publisher and the editor-in-chief have been in and out of jail for years. The photographers and journalists have been beaten up repeatedly and have had their homes raided. The weekly has been shut down on five occasions, once for as long as six months. *Análisis* magazine—which started more or less at the same time under the auspices of an educational institute of the Catholic church, and then became autonomous—has experienced similar hardship. It has also seen one of its top journalists, José Carrasco, murdered. Both of the major dissident newspapers have had to use circuitous routes to reach the public. When, in one of its decrees, the government forbade new publications, one opposition group sought out a local open-air market's news bulletin and bought its right to publish, eventually turning that monthly into a daily national paper, *Fortín Mapocho*; and another group sued the government and, in a three-year lawsuit, won the right to publish *La Epoca*.

But the story of these publications is not merely one of courage and cunning. Not one of these ploys would have worked had there not been, simultaneously, the sense that something was staying the government's hand, that there were forces keeping repression, no matter how brutal, within boundaries. Some of these forces were, undoubtedly, external: Hitler and Mussolini did not have to be as wary of their image as does a dependent Third World dictatorship that needs foreign aid to stay afloat. But the internal pressures on the government were far more significant. As in Gandhi's India and Martin Luther King's America, the possibility of a deep crisis in the ruling coalition constitutes the second condition for successful nonviolent resistance. In Chile, enough supporters of the dictatorship believed that the country should be one where cars do not run over cripples and students in the streets—at least, not routinely. They thought it necessary as a shock measure to put down what they believed was a Marxist insurrection, but such permanent violence did nothing to ensure the country's long-term stability.

Thus, each time Pinochet savaged those who were rebelling against his rule, he lost support. The opposition bet that a large segment of Chile's ruling class, including its politicians and many of its military, would at some point agree that it was time to map out a future based on consensus rather than confrontation or the whims of a single man. The opposition's gamble proved correct when the results of the October 5th plebiscite rolled in: a coup that Pinochet had already set in motion for that very night was called off when Pinochet heard that both Onofre Jarpa (leader of the aforementioned Renovación Nacional and Pinochet's former minister of internal security) and General Fernando Matthei (the head of the air force) had acknowledged the opposition's victory. The general in charge of the Santiago garrison (now vice commander-in-chief of the army) refused to permit Pinochet's special forces to take over the city. It didn't hurt that the U.S. government, which, after all, had financed and sponsored the coup against Allende, this time warned Pinochet against disrupting the electoral process.

The triumph of this jaywalking tactic of the Chilean people should not, however, blind us. The opposition

may have won the plebiscite, but it will enter the government from a relatively weak position. To begin with, during these months of surrealistic cohabitation with a dictator who can no longer claim to represent the majority but who rules nonetheless, Pinochet has had the chance to leave the country *bién amarrado*—well tied up. He has gerrymandered the electoral districting so that ultraconservatives are guaranteed a disproportionate number of congressmen; he has stacked the Supreme Court with his own men; he has set up a Central Bank (somewhat on the model of the Federal Reserve Bank) to keep economic policy beyond the next government's control; he has sold a series of profitable publicly owned companies for a pittance, strengthening Chile's right-wing entrepreneurs; he is preparing a law that extends further amnesty to the military for human rights abuses; he has renegotiated Chile's staggering $18 billion foreign debt (the highest per capita in Latin America) so that the next administration will be left to pay some $2 billion per annum rather than $800 million; and he has made sure that television, which he kept under strict surveillance during his reign, will henceforth be exempt from public-interest control.

Can we get the military to look us in the eyes and accept that the country itself is in danger of dying of hunger and immorality?

This constant intervention of Pinochet and his meddling with the future—not to mention his threat to imitate Cincinnatus, the Roman emperor who came out of retirement to save the land—was hardly what the resistance had planned for democratic Chile. Indeed, the main dissident strategy for most of these years had not been geared to a plebiscite at all; the idea was to organize large-scale disruption of public life that would force the military to get rid of their commander-in-chief and negotiate free elections. These efforts, however, which stretched from May 1983 until the end of 1987, did not have the desired effect. If the millions of people watching those battles for the streets had stepped off the sidewalks, if they could have been convinced to place their bodies in front of the oncoming tanks as many (albeit insufficient) thousands were doing, then Pinochet would undoubtedly have fallen sooner and more precipitously. The democratic movement then would have been able to take over the government from a position of increased strength, making it easier to repair the terrible damage the dictator has inflicted upon the country.

After all, the streets of Chile are not only filled with cheerful jaywalkers and benevolent drivers. They are also brimming with impoverished men, women, and children looking for work, hawking wares nobody wants, offering to wash windows, to walk the dog, to pull weeds out of the garden, to perform sex. The New York banks, the State Department, the international aid and loan agencies, the fruit importers of the universe are each ecstatic about the Chilean economic miracle. If it is true that Chile has kept inflation down (as Argentina has not) and managed to service its foreign debt (as Brazil has not), what the statistics do not show is that such policies are made possible only by the sort of extreme repression and widespread fear that keep workers reined in and citizens scared of protesting the drastic cuts in basic services (education, health, transportation, housing). Neither do they show that 48.6 percent of Chileans live well below the poverty line; that the official minimum salary has decreased three times more than in any other Latin American nation; that child prostitution, delinquency, and drug abuse in the slum areas have doubled in recent years; that our children are being born more stunted; that hospitals do not have bandages and schools do not have lavatories; that shantytowns with 150,000 people have only seven telephones available; and that millions of households are made up of several families squalidly bunched together in two rooms under makeshift roofs.

The Concertación has come up with an emergency plan to help the neediest sectors of Chile, the 27 percent that takes in only 3.3 percent of the country's total income. The only way to finance this solidarity fund is to tax the extremely rich (20 percent of the country takes in 61 percent of the country's total income) and to cut back the overblown military budget. It remains to be seen if these two groups that benefited most in the last sixteen years are ready to set aside some of their privileges for the good of the country or if they will feel so threatened that they will sabotage the transition to democracy itself. Nevertheless, the plan itself merely signals a shift from the Friedmanesque policies of Pinochet. It is a stopgap measure and not a radical departure. All ideological tendencies in the Concertación agree to it because nobody at this point wants to attack the relatively dynamic private sector that is needed to pull Chile out of its morass.

The democratic forces, therefore, have left for tomorrow—perhaps a faraway tomorrow—the task of grappling with the unjust social and economic structure which is at the root of all the turmoil of the last decades. Even though the need for radical reform of the system continues to be as urgent as ever, the top priority for the resistance inevitably and correctly has been the struggle to restore a State where one is not killed or persecuted for publicly addressing the need

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Divine Conversations

Judith Plaskow

On God-Language

Every religious community speaks a language based on its own central experience. In Judaism, our images of God come down to us through the Bible, rabbinic literature, and the traditional Hebrew liturgy. God is "lord," "king," or "protector"; "father," "rock," or "provider." God is sometimes a warrior, sometimes a judge, sometimes a merciful father. Such language I call God-language.

As Jewish feminists, we are seeking a God-language that expresses the central experience of our community—the presence of God in empowered, egalitarian community. In coming together as women in a shared commitment to a common vision, we have found ourselves with another presence that is the ultimate source of our hopes and intentions, and that undergirds and sustains them. Yet while we have created new natural images to speak about God, we have not found a language that invokes the presence of God in community. Traditional metaphors are inadequate because they imagine God as the ruler over community rather than as partner of and goad to community. We have yet to find a language to replace the traditional ways of speaking about God.

I would suggest that there are at least two kinds of Jewish feminist God-naming that, when taken together, could help to produce a picture of God that reflects the experience of egalitarian community. The first kind of God-language is anthropomorphic language. Some feminists have sought to solve the problem of traditional male metaphors by using nonimagistic, or at least nonpersonal, language. Some women have preferred to fill in names like "God" or "the Eternal" with new experiences, rather than create new images that would reify certain aspects of experience. But while it is certainly true that anthropomorphic images can be dangerous, supporting patterns of dominance, such images also appeal to aspects of our nature that cannot be reached by abstract philosophical discourse or designations such as "God" and "the Eternal." Even nonpersonal images, though they are important to feminist God-language, are not themselves sufficient to evoke the God of community. In addition to the fact that nonanthropomorphic language threatens to leave intact old anthropomorphic images, it is difficult to convey the presence of God in community while excluding those images that come most directly from the web of interpersonal relations that constitute community.

To my mind, then, feminists should not avoid the use of anthropomorphic imagery—though it is imperative that they encourage the use of a wide range of metaphors. Feminists must encourage the use of disquieting female images as well as female and nongendered images that express intimacy and partnership between humans and God. It may be important, for example, to use, for a time, images such as "queen of the universe" and "woman of war" in order to jar worshipers, precipitate discussion, and raise questions about the meaning and effects of the imagery we use. What is the source of our attachment to male imagery? Is the image of a monarch—male or female—one we want to affirm? Do women need to claim the warrior within themselves, and are there images of the warrior that are not images of violent destruction? While metaphors of queen and warrior are problematic and will not constitute the lasting contribution of feminism to Jewish God-language, they have an important bridge-role to play in presenting images of female religious power to a community that has denied women this attribute. More enduring images will try to combine female metaphors with a changed conception of God; they may also make use of nongendered language.

Images of God as "lover" and "friend" are present in the Jewish tradition, but they are greatly overshadowed by "father" and "king." In midrash, God as the young warrior at the Red Sea is identified with the lover of the Song of Songs who, at the moment of liberation, comes to Israel as her beautiful bridegroom. Although the image of God as lover-bridegroom later disappears, it and father-judge are the central rabbinic metaphors for the love of God. As Sallie McFague suggests in *Models of God,* the image of God as lover validates the erotic element in spirituality and affirms the value of the loved one. Images of God as king, judge, and father convey a promise of enduring love *despite* a community's sins; the notion of God as lover proclaims that God

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This article is excerpted from her book Standing at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective, *which will be published by Harper & Row in January 1990. The footnotes which appear in the book are not included in this version.*

loves Israel *because of who Israel is.* The idea that we are loved for what is most valuable in us, that God sees our worth even when we cannot, is far more conducive to the fostering of human empowerment and accountability than the idea that we are loved despite our worthlessness. In traditional Jewish usage, of course, God as valuing lover is the comely young man wooing the subordinate Israel to be his bride. Feminist use of the image of God as lover would need to break this patriarchal model of love relations, and envision the lover as both female and male. Israel is not "she"; *it* is a community of women and men, all of whom can be the lovers and loved of God.

The image of God as friend also appears in rabbinic discussion and finds its way into the Yom Kippur liturgy in the multiple metaphors of *Ki Anu Amekha.* In contrast to symbols of God as Other, the image of God as friend implies a freely chosen, reciprocal connection—a profound metaphor for the covenantal relationship. As McFague sees it, the image of God as friend points to a common vision or commitment that brings people together, both uniting them and helping them turn toward the world. Indeed, since all life is relational, friendship is possible across ontological boundaries; we can be friends of the earth and friends of God.

Closely related to the image of friend is the image of "companion." While both images are ambiguous (they are often used interchangeably), they can also represent different aspects of the experience of relation. If friendship entails a unique bond between two people that distinguishes their relationship from more casual associations, a companion is one who simply travels along the same way. The image of companion thus lacks the passion of the friendship image, but it does provide the same sense of equality, using a more social metaphor. One can imagine many companions linked together by some shared task, laboring side by side for the achievement of their ends. Such companionship may be brief or can last through a lifetime. Metaphors of God as friend and companion capture, in different ways, the closeness of God's relationship to Israel. These metaphors suggest that God and Israel are mutually accountable as they join in the project of sanctifying and repairing the world.

Another image, somewhat more awkward, is that of "co-creator," which suggests the shared responsibility of God and Israel. The prefix "co," which is usable with a range of images, conjures a sense of personal empowerment and mutual responsibility that emerges out of speaking and acting within a community. For example, when people work together to recognize the limits that have been placed on women, when people experience the possibility of a life beyond those limits, they experience a sense of significant participation in the large project of world-creation, a project that God and human beings share. To name the self and name the world in new ways is to enter, along with God, into the act of creation. Insofar as human beings are co-creators with God, God is also a co-creator. Creation is not a discrete event completed by God in six days but a process that continues through dialogue with human beings who have the power to carry forward or destroy the world that God has created. This image of God as co-creator strongly accords with the notion in the Jewish mystical tradition that human beings are responsible for fulfilling the work of creation by uniting the separated aspects of divinity through the power of the deed.

God is male-female lover, friend, companion, co-creator, the one who, seeing what is best in us, encourages us to be the most we can be.

These images of God as lover, friend, companion, and co-creator are more appropriate metaphors for the God of the covenant than are the traditional images of lord and king. Defining God's power not as domination but as empowerment, they evoke a God who is with us instead of over us, a partner in dialogue who ever and again summons us to responsible action. Rather than reminding human beings of their frailty and nothingness, these images call us to account as partners in a solemn compact—a compact that demands our response. We do not act most responsibly when we feel subjugated, worthless, and culpable, but when we know our own value, mirrored in the constancy of a God who is both friend and lover, a God who calls us to enter into the task of creation. We respond, not to avoid guilt, but because—as the kabbalistic tradition reminds us—what we do or leave undone as co-creators makes a difference in the world.

Imagining God as friend and co-creator provides only one stratum of a feminist understanding of God. As human beings, we become co-creators with God only after we come into being as part of a much larger web of existence—a web we now have the power to destroy but which we did not conceive or create. Anthropomorphic images must be supplemented by a second kind of language that can evoke the creative and sustaining power of God, a God who is present throughout the world and who exists in ever-widening circles of relation. This stratum of language should encompass an even wider range of images than the first, including natural

and impersonal metaphors as well as conceptual terms which express God's relation to all being and becoming.

Images of God as "fountain," "source," "wellspring," "ground of life," and "being" remind us that God loves and befriends us as one who brings forth and sustains all being. For the brief span of our lives, we are co-creators with God, and are responsible not just to the immediate community, but also to the larger community of creation that God also loves and befriends. Metaphors of ground and source continue the reconceptualization of God's power, shifting our sense of direction from a God in the heavens to a God present in the very ground beneath our feet that nourishes and sustains us. As a tree draws up sustenance from the soil, so we are rooted in the source of our being. Images of God as "rock," "tree of life," "light," "darkness," and myriad other metaphors drawn from nature teach us the intrinsic value of the wider web of being. The God who is the ground of being is present in all beings—every aspect of creation shows us another face of God.

More conceptual images for God also have a role in feminist discourse. The traditional image of God as "place" (*makom*) evokes both the presence of the world in God and the extraordinary presence of God in particular places. As Rabbi Jose ben Halafta said, "We do not know whether God is the place of His world, or the world is His place." This richly ambiguous term communicates the importance of community as the site of God's manifestation. Community is a place where we find ourselves in God; God dwells in this place. Also relevant here is the image of Shekhina, which, like the term God itself, cuts across the layers of anthropomorphic and nonpersonal language. Addressed in a myriad of personal guises, the Shekhina is also the presence of God in the place called the world and the one who rests in the midst of community.

Feminists are frequently asked, What becomes of the Otherness or "Godness" of God when the primary feminist metaphors for God involve warm and intimate images? If God is friend and lover—albeit also ground and source of being—does this not detract from the divinity and exaltedness of God? This question can be answered only by distinguishing among very different meanings of the concept of Otherness. The sense of Otherness I have been criticizing is the notion of God as a dominating sovereign who manipulates the world from outside it and above. I have argued that metaphors that depict God as Other in *this* sense mirror and sustain destructive social relations that ought never to be sanctified by any religious usage. But rejecting such metaphors does not entail abandoning God's "moreness"; it simply challenges us to imagine that moreness in nonhierarchical terms. Just as a community is more than the sum of its members without necessarily controlling or dominating these members, so God as the total community and source of unity is more than all things, without needing to control or dominate them.

A second understanding of Otherness refers to people who are considered different from and less than the dominant group in a given culture. Feminist God-language seeks to address and to undermine this understanding of Otherness by finding divinity in what had hitherto been despised. In developing images of a God who is female, dark, and natural, we are encouraged to reexamine and value the many forms of Otherness, claiming their multiform particularity as significant and sacred.

A third understanding of Otherness points to God as mystery and adversary—the presence of God experienced not as friend but as devouring fire, a God who represents the terrible aspects of existence. Although as feminists we continually confront human evil in the form of patriarchy and other destructive structures of hierarchical relation, we have not yet fully addressed the theological question of evil as a feminist issue. This side of God can be expressed through images of waning and death, pain and struggle, all of which are aspects of a complex and changing reality. God as source can also be experienced as nothingness; God as friend can also appear as enemy. But while we must speak about God as Other in this sense, it is unnecessary to do so using images of hierarchical domination. The hierarchies in our world are human creations. The God who brings to birth and destroys, gives forth and takes away, judges my limitations and calls me to struggle is terrifying, not because of God's distance, but precisely because of God's nearness. This Otherness, which is incompatible with the intimacy of feminist metaphors, becomes the difficult counterpart and companion to feminist God-language.

We are left, then, with a picture of God as a God of many faces—as many as the souls who stood at Sinai, as many as the complexities and conflicts of human and Jewish existence. At the center of this picture stands the Jewish feminist experience of a God encountered in the midst of community—a God revealed as the community and those within it discover their destiny and understand that destiny as part of a larger universe of action and response. This God is male-female lover, friend, companion, co-creator, the one who, seeing what is best in us, encourages us to be the most we can be. This God is ground and source of all life, creating, holding, and sustaining the great web of existence and, as part of it, the human companions who labor to make the world a home for the divine presence. This God is the God of Israel, the God that the nascent community experienced and acknowledged at the wonderful events

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Edward Said: Discourse and Palestinian Rage

Mark Krupnick

No Palestinian writer has focused more persistently on the problem of Palestinian identity than Edward Said. In numerous books, essays, and articles in American newspapers, Said has emphasized the importance of legitimizing one's national narrative, and he has repeatedly confessed exasperation about the difficulty of getting a hearing for his side. Indeed, for many American intellectuals on the Left, Said is *the* voice of Palestinian nationalism. He speaks as a representative figure within the mainstream Palestinian movement, as a member of the Palestine National Council, and as adviser to Yasir Arafat. For American Jews interested in achieving a greater understanding of Palestinian aims and attitudes, Said's writings on the subject are a good place to start.

Born in Jerusalem in 1935, Said has lived in America for nearly forty years and is currently a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. His scholarship has earned him a reputation as one of America's foremost literary critics. His best-known studies are *Orientalism* (1978), a wide-ranging attack on Western writing about Islam from the time of Napoleon to the present, and *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), a collection of literary essays. In *Orientalism* and in his more recent political criticism, Said's central subject is discourse—specifically, the verbal representation of the Arab world by non-Arabs. Through his study of discourse, Said attempts to bridge the gap between the academy and the world of political struggle. Writing about Israel, for example, he concerns himself not with land appropriation, borders, and immigration policy but with the larger issue of power—in this case power that enables the victor in war (Israel) to consolidate and legitimize its triumphs by writing the history of the conflict and by establishing the frame of reference that limits future discussion and debate.

The trouble for many American Jews is that Said's writing depicts the Palestinians as innocent victims of Israeli oppression. In other words, one's hackles are easily raised reading Said; and his argument—about the history of Western Arabism and, more specifically, about misrepresentation of the Palestinians—has embroiled him in a series of sharp polemical exchanges.

Perhaps the most notable of these exchanges involved Said and political theorist Michael Walzer. I want to start with the Walzer–Said debate both because it affords an unusually telescopic view of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and because Walzer is a well-known left-leaning figure whose writings are familiar to many readers of *Tikkun*. Co-editor of *Dissent* magazine, the democratic-socialist journal founded by Irving Howe in 1954, Walzer has been writing on politics since the late sixties.

The debate was initiated by Said's review of Walzer's book *Exodus and Revolution* in *Grand Street* (Winter 1986). Walzer responded with a letter to the editor (Summer 1986), and Said countered with an eight-page response of his own. The exchange was unusual not for its length, but for its tone. At the close of Said's response, for example, he refers to Walzer's substantial body of work as a monument to its author's "prolonged servility to a strong Israel"; he goes on to dismiss his opponent as "[a] courtier, an amateur mythographer, a champion of the strong. A small frightened man who is completely unequal to the question of Canaan-Palestine, and barely adequate for the easier bits of *Exodus*."

This kind of language is by no means unusual in Said's political writing. His recently published essay in *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 1989) is even more abusive. Confronted with such hostility, a prudent person might be excused for considering it the better part of valor simply to walk away. And yet when Walzer was asked to appear with Said at the Palestinian/American Jewish roundtable at *Tikkun*'s national conference last December, he accepted the invitation. In doing so, he sent out a message that Palestinian rage must be met head on, even if our initial response may be fear and rage of our own.

The context of that mutual rage is broad. Ever since 1948, Israel has waited for the Arab states to acknowledge its existence. The majority Arab view has long been that Israel has neither moral nor political legitimacy. It seems that Said continues to endorse this point of view even though the Palestine National Council now recognizes Israel's existence. The issue of acknowledgment has deep implications for Said. Acknowledgment empowers, and Said has emphasized how Israeli power has generated forms of knowledge (including academic research and mass-media propaganda) that have had

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the effect of legitimizing Israel while discrediting its Palestinian opponents.

The Palestinian scholar Ibrahim Abu-Lughod has addressed this issue of empowerment under the heading of the "politics of negation." In his view, the key to Zionist–Palestinian politics is the mutual refusal of acknowledgment. In 1969 Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir summed up a long-standing Israeli government position when she said that "there is no such thing as a Palestinian people; they do not exist." Meir was only restating Chaim Weizmann's position, which he expressed as early as 1914: "There is a country called Palestine, a country without a people, and on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary than ... to unite this people with this country?"

What about the people already on the land? They were perceived as "Arabs," members of the Arab majority in the Middle East, rather than as Palestinians with powerful, long-standing ties to Palestine. In any case, they weren't organized into a "distinct administrative/geopolitical unit," as Abu-Lughod points out. Consequently, they had no consciousness of themselves as a specific nation.

Modern-day Palestinian national consciousness is a product of the dispossession of those Palestinians, and of the successful effort by political militants and intellectuals such as Said to create a greater sense of nationhood. The recentness of the Palestinian effort to establish a national self-identity seems to lie at the heart of Said's angry response to Walzer. While Said has achieved considerable eminence as a spokesman for the Palestinians, he writes on behalf of a people who have been vulnerable to "negation" because they have not yet established themselves on the map of the Middle East. Indeed, they are still recovering from the trauma of having had the names of their cities and villages replaced on that map by Hebrew names.

It is necessary here to emphasize Palestinian self-perception and vulnerability. Otherwise, the rage Walzer's book inspired becomes incomprehensible. *Exodus and Revolution* is an interpretation of the biblical story of the Exodus in light of what this story has meant for progressive political movements throughout Western history. The movements Walzer cites as having been inspired by the ancient Israelites include Cromwell's revolution in seventeenth-century England, the American Revolution, the Black civil rights movement, and Zionism. Like the theorists of these earlier movements, Walzer tries to reinterpret Exodus in light of his own politics. He offers what he calls the "social democratic version of Exodus." His political purpose is to argue for a kind of left-wing Zionism that repudiates religious claims to the Land of Israel without repudiating the Jewish basis of the state. Walzer's intention is "to oppose redemptive and messianic and divinely inspired politics." In so doing, he is staking out a position in an intramural Israeli debate on the future of the West Bank.

From a left-liberal point of view, Walzer's position is attractive: practical-minded, antimessianic, and modest in its formulations. He writes as an American Jew, one of a generation of American left intellectuals who have rejected the universalism of the thirties in favor of particularism, membership, and community. To the Jewish community, Walzer appears to take modest pride and pleasure in an achieved Jewish peoplehood. From Said's point of view, however, Walzer's position reeks of Jewish "triumphalism."

Said's purpose is to delegitimize a canonical text. How better to avenge the injury of political exclusion than to discredit the stories by which your enemy makes sense of itself as a people?

Excessive as it is, Said's attack on Walzer gets to the core of the problem. Exodus politics, social-democratic or not, involves an affirmation of traditional Jewish values. But what, at this critical stage in the history of Zionism, is the connection between historic Jewish values and Israeli state policy? Are the religious settlers on the West Bank fulfilling a democratic movement of national liberation, or are they engaged in an aggressive, expansionist enterprise? While *Exodus and Revolution* deals sharply with the right-wing messianism of the zealots, it is in fact vulnerable to the charge that it associates Israel with virtue triumphant. Walzer's rhetoric in this regard seems too much the mirror image of Palestinian claims to innocence. It should be evident by now that neither side has a monopoly on virtue. The rhetoric of both sides, which admits neither error nor injustice, has contributed to the present impasse. A more helpful rhetoric might be drawn from the example of Meron Benvenisti, the Israeli writer and civil servant best known for his research on Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Benvenisti's book *Conflicts and Contradictions* (1986) has precisely that element of double consciousness—of a self-critical awareness of ambiguity and intractable contradiction—that is missing in Said, and sacrificed in Walzer because of his greater concern with his own relationship to the Jewish community.

Said calls his essay on Walzer "A Canaanite Reading." His Canaanism is that of a westernized intellectual who

has taken it upon himself to convey his people's cause to a North American and European public. As rhetorician and ideologist, he declares himself frustrated by Israel's privileged association with one of the archetypal stories of the West. So long as Christendom is inspired by the ancient narrative of Egyptian bondage and the march through the Wilderness to a Promised Land, who will ever really care about the latter-day Canaanites? Said could counter this narrative advantage by arguing that modern-day Israel is unworthy of its biblical precursor. But he takes a different tack, trying to discredit the story of Exodus itself. The Jews didn't have it so bad, he says; the Spartan helots were far more oppressed. Moreover, he maintains, the Israelites were not treated badly until the Egyptian economy foundered. They were not an enslaved people but a comprador class, which is to say, agents of outside financial interests. In his rebuttal to Said, Walzer dismisses this claim, showing how it echoes the old anti-Semitic canard about a conspiracy of international Jewish finance capital.

Said's is a war directed at his enemy's most intimate and cherished sense of itself. His purpose is to delegitimize a canonical text and the classical symbols it has engendered. How better to avenge the injury of political exclusion than to discredit the stories by which your enemy makes sense of itself as a people? As though for good measure, Said also accuses Walzer of poaching on fundamentally foreign discursive terrain. He accuses Walzer of co-opting the concept of "national liberation" from Third World revolutionary movements that resulted in the overthrow of colonial rule. Zionism, in Said's view, has been from the start an imperialist-racist movement. If one accepts that view, it follows that Walzer is appropriating the language of a genuinely radical politics to dignify a movement allied with the most retrograde colonialism. When one exposes the distortion involved in Said's portrayal of Zionism, however, one realizes that his attack is simply another ploy to discredit Israel.

Again and again, Said returns to Israel's discursive priority. Not only do the Zionists hold the sacred land and threaten to extend their control; they also control the discourse that simultaneously justifies possession of that land and renders alternative solutions unthinkable and unspeakable. For a discourse is like a language: we come to it and can't help but frame sentences implicit in its grammar. Palestinians, therefore, see themselves negated not only in material terms but at the level of language and perception as well. The loss of home and homeland is catastrophic for a people, but to hear repeatedly that one's "people" doesn't even exist compounds the trauma of negation. This affront to the most intimate sense of selfhood is a primary cause of Palestinian rage.

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Hayden White, the historian of ideas, once remarked that the Palestinians need better stories. Said's activities as a theorist of Palestinian national consciousness suggest that he has taken White's words to heart. Curiously, the stories he comes up with often turn out to be Palestinian variants of Jewish stories. It is the Jews, after all, who are linked in the West with the great narrative of dispersion-and-return that is now central to the Palestinian identity. To find oneself vying not only for land but for a national narrative, and to discover the former occupied and the latter out of reach, is to be enraged.

Said's rage, then, derives in part from his perception that the stories of his people have tended to be imitations of Jewish stories or, at best, contingent in relation to the established narratives of the Jews. As Said himself has acknowledged, there is no major work of Palestinian historiography. Neither is there a culture-creating achievement in fiction that embodies the story of a people, as does Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (which offers a version of Black American experience since Reconstruction) or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (a novel Said has praised that tells the story of India since it achieved independence from England). Nor do the Palestinians have a sacred text of their own, like Exodus, to memorialize an original covenant between a

people and its god. Said has lamented these deficiencies and has worked hard to remedy them. But he has not always resisted the temptation to lay all blame on Israel and its supporters for the problems that can be traced, at least in part, to the Palestinians.

In the years just after the 1982 expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, Said highlighted the issue of a new national narrative. In an essay entitled "Permission to Narrate" (*Journal of Palestine Studies,* Spring 1984), he reflected on "the depressed condition of the Palestinian narrative at present." Faced by yet another dispersion, Said wrote of the anguish of the Palestinian intellectual struggling "to give national shape to a life now dissolving into many unrelated particles." A Palestinian of legalistic mind might have concluded that it was time to push for new UN resolutions censuring Israel and certifying the Palestinians as legitimate claimants to an independent state. But Said is a thinker of another ilk, an ideologist who is at the same time a literary man, a specialist in narratology.

In *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986), Said achieves a kind of solution. A series of fragmentary reflections composed to accompany Jean Mohr's often poignant photographs of Palestinian daily life, the book might be seen as Said's contribution to the forging of the uncreated conscience of his people. The broken narrative, influenced by postmodernist models in fiction, is self-consciously presented as a mirror of Palestinian life in exile and under occupation. The book is valuable also in showing that envy of the Zionists' narrative priority need not always result in rage and the imputation of all wrongdoing to the Jews. Belatedness can lead also to melancholy and to a self-critical analysis of one's situation. In *After the Last Sky,* Said recognizes that Palestinians will have to do more than discredit Israeli discourse. They will have to create their own symbols, archetypes, heroic personalities, and myths. Their relative failure to do so up to now forms the basis of Said's self-reflection:

> There is no great episode in our history that establishes imperatives for our future course.... We have no dominant theory of Palestinian culture, history, society; we cannot rely on one central image (exodus, holocaust, long march); there is no completely coherent discourse adequate to us, and I doubt whether at this point, if someone could fashion such a discourse, we could be adequate for it.

The mood here is vastly different from the rancor of the piece on Walzer, which was published in the same year. We can expect to see more such volatility—from gloom to rage—in the years to come, as the Palestinians endure the agonizing pains of birth as a nation. The ebullience of this past year, in the wake of the uprising and the declaration of national independence in Algiers (see Said's "*Intifada* and Independence" in *Social Text,* Spring 1989), is hardly likely to last in the face of the intractable difficulties peacemaking will entail.

Meanwhile, *After the Last Sky* holds its special place in Said's body of work. It is a hybrid text that combines features of different forms: novel, autobiographical reflection, metatheoretical essay, and photo-caption commentary. But it is most moving in its direct expression of pain—the pain of a dispersed, storyless people fighting for identity.

My purpose, then, in discussing Palestinian discourse-envy is not to provide ammunition to those who would use Israel's supposed cultural superiority to justify contempt for the Palestinians or a refusal to acknowledge their legitimacy as a people. Palestinian rights do not depend on the ability of Palestinians to create narratives and a repertoire of symbols.

I have taken up the question of discourse because it is Edward Said's main theme, and I have wanted to understand that theme in relation to the enmity that disturbed me in his polemical writing. The reasons for that enmity might seem obvious in view of Israel's role as a dispossessing and occupying power. In fact, enmity is rarely that simple, and Jews have not yet tried hard enough to understand the woundedness that lies behind it.

In a time of confusion and promise, we all look for solutions—the cleaner and simpler the better. A consideration of Palestinian rage in relation to the felt disadvantages of Palestinians at every level only makes clearer that definitive solutions are still far off. A process is underway in which we are all coming to accept that the Palestinians do exist—not only as individuals, but as a national collective that will not consent to be invisible. Our own best hope lies in honoring them as neighbors and acknowledging their pain. But it would be untrue to say that, faced by Palestinian rage, our sympathy wholly blots out our fear and distrust. The project of understanding encourages identification with the Other, but it also entails owning up to our feelings about being the object of Palestinian rage. So long as envy and vengefulness remain central elements in the situation, Israelis may be excused for wanting to proceed step by step. No doubt that manner of proceeding will inspire still more Palestinian rage because Israelis aren't able, overnight, to repair the wounds of the past. □

The Bough Breaks

Lore Segal

Intimations

"Ring around o' rosies," sings our nursery rhyme. "Ashes, ashes," it adds, "we all fall down." Watch out for the hidden terror in the lullaby:

Rock-a-bye baby
in the tree top.
When the wind blows
the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks
the cradle will fall.
Down will come baby
cradle and all.

I recall the family breakfast when my father refused to hear the preliminary creaking of that bough.

"Did you read this, Igo?" my Uncle Paul asked at dinner in the autumn of 1937. "Another speech and Hitler can put Austria in his pocket. I know the university; it's ninety percent Nazi."

"A lot of Socialist propaganda," said my father.

My mother's brother Paul, who lived with us in Vienna and was twenty-six, a medical student, and generally avant-garde in his thinking, liked taking extreme positions in order to prick my father, who was forty-two and an accountant, to his predictable platitudes.

"You're talking about a handful of lunatics," said my father.

"We Jews are a remarkable people," Paul said. "Our neighbor tells us he's getting his gun out for us, and we sit watching him polish and load it and train it at our heads and we say, 'He doesn't really mean us.'"

"So what should we do? Go and hide in the cellar every time some raving lunatic in Germany makes a speech?"

"We should pack our rucksacks and get out of this country, that's what we should do," Paul said.

"And go to the jungle, I suppose, and live off coconuts. According to your brother, Franzi," my father said to my mother, "every time a raving lunatic in Germany makes a speech, we should go and live off coconuts in the jungle."

"Is it going to be war?" I asked my mother, aside. I had a sick feeling in my stomach. I knew about the First World War. I had a recurring nightmare about my mother and me sitting in a cellar with tennis rackets, repelling the bullets that kept coming in through a horizontal slit of window.

"No, no, no. Nothing like that," my mother said.

I tried to imagine some calamity but did not know how. My mother was ringing the bell for Poldi, the maid, to bring coffee. I decided there must not, there could not, be anything so horrible that we would have to pack and leave everything. I stopped listening to the grownups.

On the eighth of the following March, I had my tenth birthday. On the twelfth, Hitler took Austria.

Shall we blame my father who chose to quarrel with my Uncle Paul instead of packing our rucksack? And how was it that Uncle Paul did not pack up and get out of the country while that was an option?

I remember my horror at seeing how powerless the grown-ups were.

Remember Lot. It took three of the Lord's messengers to mobilize Lot. "'If you have kinfolk in the city,' they said to him, 'sons-in-law or sons or daughters, get them out of town.' Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, 'Quick! Leave the city! The Lord is going to destroy it.' Lot's sons-in-law thought he was joking." And what does Lot himself do? Does he hurry to pack his rucksack? The Book knows our human hearts. "When morning came, the angels of the Lord tried to hurry Lot and said, 'Quick, take your wife and the two daughters who live with you, or you will be destroyed. . . .' Still Lot hung back, so the men took him by the hand and took the hands of his wife and his two daughters . . . and led them away and did not let go of them until they were outside the gates. . . ."

Reader, how quick will you and I be to look our next calamity in the eye? Here's an exercise for us: Regard the rucksack. Now look at all the stuff we can't pack into

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Lore Segal teaches English at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is the author of Her First American *(Knopf, 1985) and* Other People's Houses *(Fawcett, 1986).*

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The italicized sections of this essay are drawn from Lore Segal's Other People's Houses *and* The Book of Adam and Moses.

it—our backyard, our friendly old bed, and our brand new tennis racket; the season ticket to the symphony and our next year's vacation that is all paid up; our savings, our promotion, and the annuity for our old age; and the language in which we make our living and in which we understand ourselves and speak to our friends. We will have to leave our friends and our aunts and cousins and our mother and our father. Now, it seems to me, *after* we have imagined my father at that moment, in that situation, and have pitied him, I think that we must blame him. Nor did any messengers from the Lord come to take him by the hand.

My own childish denial was to think, it can't happen because that would be too terrible. I wonder if that familiar formulation comes as readily to the post-Auschwitz, the post-Hiroshima generation, which has historical evidence that the gun into the barrel of which we are staring can go off in our faces, and does.

Anschluss

Early in the morning after the events of March 12 *my parents took me downstairs and we stood in a long line of people outside the bank at the corner; the bank did not open. All around us in the street were young men in strange, brand-new uniforms, saluting each other with right arms stretched forward. It was a clear, sunny March morning. Bright new flags were flying, but my parents hurried me home.*

At school the next day, the teacher *announced that instead of poetry we would have an hour of handicrafts and would take down the pro-Austrian, anti-German posters we had been made to paste and pin around the schoolroom walls. By the end of the week, the desks in our room had been rearranged so that the half-dozen Jewish children in the class could sit together in the rear with two empty rows between us and the Aryans in front. Then the Jewish children were assigned to a separate classroom. We knew very well that no teacher wanted to teach Jewish classes. I remember the teacher who came into our room. She was a soft-faced, stout young woman and her eyes were red. We stood up to greet her with the awe of children in the presence of a grown-up who is crying. Then the school was cleared of Aryans and the Jewish children and teachers were brought in to make ours the Jewish school for the district.*

By May, Poldi, the maid, had to leave our Jewish employ. My father was given a month's notice at the bank where he had worked as chief accountant for twelve years. A week later, an SS sergeant commandeered our flat and all its furnishings, including my mother's piano.

Fischamend

My mother and father and I moved to Fischamend, a village some half an hour from Vienna and not far from the Czech border, where my grandparents owned a house and haberdasher's shop. I loved Fischamend, especially after my Uncle Paul arrived from Vienna. His left ear was dangling. The Jewish students had got into a fight with the Nazis at the University and that was the end of Uncle Paul's medical career.

One night there *appeared in the street outside the entrance of the shop, letters tall as a man, painted in white on the macadam: KAUFT NICHT BEIM JUDEN (Don't buy from the Jews).*

"The local boys," my father said.

The following morning, the front of our house had "Jew" and dirty words written in red paint all over it. The bloody color was still wet and dripping down the stone when my grandfather went out to take the shutters down. He washed it off; the letters disappeared slowly, but the color blotched the wall.

It was perhaps a week later. My grandparents, my parents, Paul, and I were sitting in the room over the store.

"Pst!" said my father, who happened to be facing the south windows and saw the heads appearing above the sill. We looked around. There were heads in the two west windows, also. Beneath the second-story windows, a narrow corrugated-iron ledge jutted out over the lower floor like a little roof. Ladders had been put against the ledge, and boys and girls from the village, still in their uniforms, had climbed up and were sitting in our windows. They stayed all night. Now and then, one of the boys would swing his legs over the sill and step into the room with us. There were some books they didn't approve of, and possessions they did, and they carried everything portable away.

The next day, the shop remained closed. The family sat around the dining-room table. I remember sitting under the table, playing with their shoelaces and listening: It was clear that we must leave Fischamend. The villagers stood in the street, throwing stones against the upstairs windows until they were all smashed.

Around dusk, the SS boys came and took the three men to the police station next door. My mother and grandmother waited in the room where I slept, leaning out of the empty window frame. My bed was pushed against the inside wall and barricaded with a mattress. All night, even while I slept, it seems to me that I heard the two women's voices speaking softly in the darkness.

At some point, I was awake, and knew that the men were back. I don't know how I know that my father had been slapped and that his glasses had been knocked off and broken. I have a vivid and quite false memory of this brutality, as if I had been a witness.

The Nazis gave us twenty-four hours to leave Fischamend and we returned to Vienna without a roof over

our heads. My parents took me to the apartment of a schoolmate, Ditta Adler, and went to find themselves a place to live. Jewish apartments, in those days, were infinitely expandable to accommodate the newly homeless. By nightfall everybody had been stowed with friends or relations.

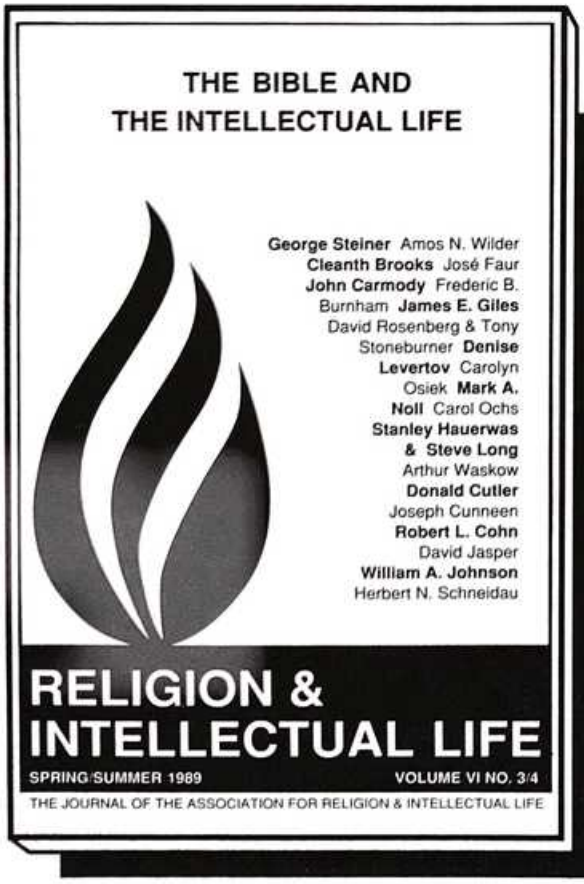
I remember it as a central worry during the terror of the next weeks that I didn't know my parents' address. My mind's eye had no information about the placement of the walls or the arrangement of the furniture wherever they might be, so that I could not imagine them anywhere at all.

I have been told that people who are hungry can talk of nothing but food. In 1938, in Vienna, Jews talked endlessly about ways of getting out of the country. The men went out mornings, as punctually as they had once left for business, to make the rounds of the consulates. One day when I was off from school, I went with my father. He met a friend and stopped to talk. The friend said he had heard something was doing in the Swiss Consulate and he was going over to put his name on the list. I had caught sight of one of those small flat boxes that had recently been attached to houses at street corners, where, behind chicken wire, pages of the newspaper Der Stürmer *were fixed open for the public to read. I inched over and looked through the chicken wire. There was a picture of an old Jewish man with monstrous lips, and another of a very fat Jewish woman standing with her feet planted grossly wide apart, but I had no time to make anything of it before my father came and hustled me away. "Where are we going?" I said, embarrassed to have been caught peeping.*

"To the Swiss consulate," he said. "To put our names on a list."

When not sitting in the waiting rooms of consulates and embassies, everybody was going to the classes that had sprung up all over the city. Jewish professionals were scurrying to learn hand skills, to feed themselves and their families in countries whose languages they would not know. My father learned machine knitting and leatherwork. The sad little purses and wallets he made turned up in our luggage for years. My mother learned large-quantity cooking. She took a course in massage. She came and she practiced on me.

Another day I went with my father to the American consulate. The line stretched down the stairs, out the door, down the street, and around the block. I remember a couple of downy-faced Hitler Youths watching from the other sidewalk. My father got our names put on the "American quota." The quota system limited the yearly number of immigrants to the United States according to the applicant's country of birth and the number of nationals from that country who had entered the U.S.



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in the year 1924. My grandparents' Hungarian number came through in 1950 and our Austrian number a year later. By that time we had emigrated to England, where my father died, and thence to the Dominican Republic, where my Uncle Paul's pregnant young wife and my grandfather lie buried. By then, eleven of my grandmother's fourteen brothers and sisters and their spouses had been killed in the concentration camps.

Kristallnacht

On November 10th, a Jew named Grüspan assassinated a minor Nazi official on a diplomatic mission to Paris. When the news reached Vienna in the afternoon, school was dismissed. We were told to go home by the back roads. The grown-ups sat beside the radio all afternoon. Toward evening, the doorbell rang, and outside stood an elderly neighbor from across the hall, his wife, and an immense mahogany sideboard, which they were being made to move into our flat. *A couple of uniformed Nazis stood along the banisters. They said to get on with the sideboard, there was more coming. In the course of that night, they forced the five Jewish families in the apartment house to move themselves and their households into our three-room, fifth-floor apartment. The rooms soon had the grotesque look of usual objects in unusual positions: chairs stacked high on wardrobes, a table upside down on the bed with china, books and lamps between its legs. The wife of the elderly neighbor sat on a chair crying, in a thin voice, without intermission. The Nazis became playful. They had discovered the main switch and kept turning the lights off, sometimes for as long as half an hour, then off and on, and off and on. Into the middle of this walked my friend's mother's brother, hoping to hide out because his own apartment was being raided, but he was intercepted and taken away to a concentration camp. My friend's mother stood in the doorway and wept. All night, the heavy baroque furniture bumped on the stairs, and squeaked over the tiles of the hall. I sat down and howled for my mother.*

The following day nobody went out. The children stayed home from school. I remember the open bed in the living room and a man who walked around in his pajamas. My memory cannot fill in the place where he must have had a face, but I see the pajamas. Every time the doorbell rang, the man in pajamas got quickly into the bed and made as if he were asleep. We children understood that he was meant to seem too ill for the Nazis to take him away. I remember my awe at the deception, and my horror at seeing how powerless the grown-ups were to prevent the world from walking into the apartment. I understood that world to be inimical and malicious and tried to picture my mother and my father out there, somewhere, in it. There is a line of Emily Dickinson's that describes a boy's perception that he is in the presence of the snake. Zero at the bone. From Kristallnacht onward we lived with zero at the bone.

I know the devil exists because I have seen his works and have been their victim. I have also seen goodness muddling alongside in Jew and in Christian, and have been its beneficiary.

I remember the day drawing to an end. I sat on the sofa next to the man in pajamas, who was playing chess with a young boy. I looked toward the window where the November sky behind the gray apartment houses grayed imperceptibly into darkness. I remember yearning for the drama of a sunset, for a sign, an earnest of salvation. I remember imagining how, on the far side of the world, there were people sitting this very moment in rooms, on sofas, who were not imagining what was happening to us here.

Emigration

In December 1938 my father heard of an experimental children's transport—a test to see if the Nazis would allow a trainload of six hundred Jewish children to cross the border. My mother has told me that she argued for my staying in Vienna, for our living or dying together. She says that the determination to send me to safety was my father's. She says that afterward, when they got home from the station, he went to bed and lay as stiff as a ramrod for two days. When my daughter, Beatrice, was ten years old, I used to watch her walking across a room and imagine sending her to another country, with no address.

My father had come to pick me up from Ditta's and we took the tram to Vienna's chief temple. It had been burned out on Kristallnacht. What looked to me like thousands of children and their parents milled around the gutted ground floor where the men were used to sitting. The line inched around the women's gallery and up the stairs. I heard my name called, and my father and I stepped out of the line. My mother had a cousin who had a girlfriend who worked in the offices of the Jüdische Kultus Gemeinde—the Jewish Cultural Community. We were conducted into her office, where she processed my papers.

(Continued on p. 88)

The Convent and Solidarity

Dawid Warszawski

"According to my statistics," wrote an irate reader to the editor, "there are, on the average, two articles on national minorities in Poland in each issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza*.... When a few Jews break into the precinct of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz and get thrown out by their collars (and rightly so) by the workers there, no less than three articles on the subject matter appear in one issue. What is more, the definite majority of my friends fail to comprehend what harm the nuns who pray for the dead do to those people, but *Gazeta*'s editorial staff seems to understand."

Gazeta Wyborcza (*Electoral Gazette*) is the Solidarity daily newspaper. Launched in May of this year, it has become Poland's most successful newspaper, with a print-run of half a million. The ideas *Gazeta* advocates usually reflect those of its readers and of the larger Solidarity constituency.

The letter I cited, however, is but a mild example of the outraged mail the newspaper has been receiving since publicly condemning the failure of the Catholic church to live up to the Geneva agreement to move the Carmelite convent from Auschwitz. The paper also decried the beating of Rabbi Avi Weiss and his fellow protesters, and the anti-Semitic homily Poland's Cardinal Jozef Glemp delivered at the Marian sanctuary in Czestochowa. This time the profound beliefs of *Gazeta*'s editors had clashed with those of its readers.

These readers' responses show that anti-Semitism is alive and well in Poland; the controversy over the convent merely sparked its expression. Polish anti-Semitism, like all prejudice, is based essentially on ignorance: most Poles know little about Judaism and Jewish history, save what they read in the New Testament, the distortions they hear about the Jews and the "masonic menace," or what they read in anti-Semitic tracts such as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Few Poles alive today actually remember the three million Jews who lived here barely half a century ago. The others base their knowledge on family lore. Because only several thousand Jews remain in the country (there are, for example, more Buddhists than Jews), the Poles have no way to distinguish fact from fantasy. Polish anti-Semitism is further exacerbated by Polish perceptions of Jews' connections with Stalinism and the Communist regime. Even now that the controversy over the Carmelite convent is dying down, the problem of Polish anti-Semitism remains. (On September 19, the Vatican publicly stated its support for the Geneva agreement and offered the Polish church financial help to carry out its terms. On September 21, Glemp stated that he favored moving the convent to an interfaith center.) Yet much can be understood about the nature of the problem if one considers the historical position of Polish Jews.

Gazeta readers seem to believe that the interests of the country and of the church are identical, that "what is good for Roman Catholicism is good for Poland." This conviction has a solid foundation in two centuries of experience, during which the Catholic church arguably played a decisive role in preserving Polish national identity and aspirations in the face of oppression by occupying powers. The dark side of this equation of nationalism and religion, however, takes form in Polish xenophobia (especially, but not solely, anti-Semitism; ask any Ukrainian), and in the parochial character of much of national intellectual and political life. The experience of recent years, during which Solidarity's underground survival was due in no small part to church support, has only reinforced the bond between nation and church, popularly expressed in the formula "Polak-katolik" ("the Pole is a Catholic").

Yet the perception that the church is the very expression of Polish identity has a problematic past. Roman Dmowski, the father of Polish nationalism, who enthusiastically supported the idea of Polak-katolik, was also the founder of the rabidly anti-Semitic National Democratic party (Endecja), which played an important role in Polish political life before World War II. (Glemp obviously identifies with Dmowski; Glemp's only contribution to the thriving underground press was a preface to a book by Dmowski.)

Before World War II, most Poles considered Jews aliens, ethnic solidarity taking precedence over formal citizenship—a deplorable attitude, if somewhat understandable. Existing anti-Semitism was intensified when Poles saw many Jews participating in the Communist movement, colluding with the Russian enemy. Some

Dawid Warszawski is the pen name of Konstanty Gebert, a Polish journalist and member of the Solidarity movement.

Poles felt a guilty sense of relief in the fact that Hitler had "solved the Polish-Jewish problem for them"; others, who had actually participated in this crime (though never as a part of Hitler's death machine), felt even guiltier. Such feelings, combined with those connected to a later outrage—the Kielce Pogrom of 1946, which left forty-two dead—made any discussion of anti-Semitism unwelcome. More important, the Communist regime made any frank conversation about the anti-Semitism problem impossible. Desperately striving to obtain any kind of legitimacy, the Communists played up to the most base anti-Semitic emotions and stereotypes (which is somewhat ironic, since a number of Jews were party members). The apparatchiks downgraded school lessons on the Shoah, for example, in order to highlight Polish suffering and heroic deeds of the Communist resistance.

But if those deeds were largely exaggerated, the suffering of the Polish people had been real. Herein resides, in my opinion, one of the most important causes of the persistence of Polish anti-Semitism. In the West, the public had learned the immense difference between the wartime fate of the Jews and, say, the French. This knowledge had led to the moral shock which made anti-Semitism morally unacceptable once and for all (except among the lunatic fringe); in Poland, however, this shock never came. Three million ethnic Poles had been murdered by the Germans, and the nation's capacity for empathy with the suffering of others had been dulled. Furthermore, the nation emerged from the war vanquished and robbed of its independence. Thousands were deported, imprisoned, or shot by the new regime (and a number of Jews played prominent roles in that regime). The suffering went on. The preexisting anti-Semitism that had its roots in Polish nationalism was now associated with anti-Communist feelings, generated during the postwar years of Stalinist-style repression.

In the seventies, however, the church started a revival of interest in Judaism and Jewish history, sponsoring seminars, courses, and practical initiatives (such as work on abandoned Jewish cemeteries). Catholic reviews began publishing articles and special issues on Jewish topics, from translations of Martin Buber to frank analyses of Polish-Jewish relations. Major books were translated and published. In the oppressive climate of the time, such activity was possible only within the church. The activity was directed mainly toward a Christian audience, whose interest in Jewish issues was heightened both by a delayed response to Vatican II and by a reemergence of interest in Poland's recent history, in which the Jews had played a very prominent role. Proselytism and polemics were largely absent from these programs, and the prevailing atmosphere was one of intensive goodwill, bordering even on a sort of naive philo-Semitism. Ironically, it was the church's activities around Judaism that prompted a revival of interest among Jews themselves. Jewish intellectuals banded together, rediscovering their Jewishness. They participated in the church seminars, encouraged by Polish-Catholic friends to express their viewpoints.

But the Polish church is not a monolith. Conservative forces within the church soon reacted against this process of rapprochement with the Jews, claiming that it was inimical both to the interests of the church and the Polish nation. They accused Jews of infiltrating the church itself. The Jews and "their lackeys," the progressive Christian intellectuals and clergymen, were attacked as "enemies of Christ." Copies of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" began to circulate, as did other underground anti-Semitic literature. The conflict came to a head in 1987, when the underground Solidarity press denounced one particular Warsaw church for being a center of anti-Semitic propaganda. Local parishioners had repeatedly protested the distribution of anti-Semitic pamphlets, calling on church authorities, including the Primate, to put a stop to such activity. The authorities, however, did not act.

The resulting uproar threatened to compromise the Pope's forthcoming pilgrimage to Poland; meanwhile, the international media picked up the story. The church finally decided to make a move and banned overt anti-Semitic propaganda. The underlying conflict, however, was not solved and reemerged with the Auschwitz affair.

In 1984, Carmelite nuns built a convent in an unused building in which the Nazis had stored the deadly Zyklon B gas for the gas chambers. By 1985, the international Jewish community was in an uproar and, in 1987, an agreement was signed in Geneva between representatives of Western European Jewish organizations and representatives of the church (including Cracow Cardinal Franciszek Macharski). The Catholic delegation formally recognized the validity of the Jewish protest and promised to move the convent to a new interfaith center which would be devoted to dialogue and teaching about the Shoah. The church agreed to build the center within two years, but later asked for a six-month extension. By the summer of 1989, however, the church had yet to buy a plot of land for the new center. The nuns, the local parishioners, and many in the church hierarchy all opposed the move.

In July 1989, Rabbi Avi Weiss, along with a group of American Jews, scaled the wall of the courtyard and staged a sit-in. Shouting anti-Semitic epithets, workers beat the protesters and threw them off the convent grounds. (The workers had been busy enlarging the convent site—proof that the nuns had no intention of abandoning the building.) A month later, Macharski cited the incident as a pretext for repealing the Geneva

agreement.

Reports on Weiss's scaling the convent wall provoked mass indignation in Poland; little was written, however, about the anti-Semitism he and the other protesters had encountered. But *Gazeta* adopted an unequivocal position: while stating that "[t]he Jewish demonstrators' attitude causes hurt and pain," it roundly condemned "the disgusting reaction of the Polish participants in the incident." One must bear in mind that all Poles, even those who are not religious, feel strongly that church buildings are holy. In the past, only the police had dared to forcibly enter church property—and they were in pursuit of Solidarity activists.

Gazeta became the forum for a flurry of articles, letters, and statements about the Weiss incident. In a letter to *Gazeta,* the Father Provincial for the Carmelite order denounced the Geneva agreement outright: "[It] contains only concessions made by the Polish side. There is not one promise by the Jews in it. No arguments reach them. Their arguments are groundless." *Gazeta* and *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (the Solidarity weekly) published a statement by Stanislaw Krajewski, a leading Jewish participant in the Christian-Jewish dialogue in Poland who, while critical of Weiss's actions, expounded on the reasons for Jewish opposition to the Carmelite convent. Meanwhile, the prestigious liberal Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny,* published an article by one of its senior editors, Jacek Wozniakowski, who addressed himself to "a Jewish friend." He wrote: "While I do not fully understand you, and do not agree with you in everything, I yield. Not for tranquility's sake ... but because standing firm by principles which seem justified to me would bring more harm than good to the greater cause we both want to serve."

Most Polish observers, however, seemed to feel that they shared no values with the Jews. Certainly anti-Semitism contributed to their attitude, but possibly more important was their lack of experience with seeing a situation through the eyes of an "other" who is accepted as an equal partner. To put it bluntly, most Poles seemed to think that the Jews had no business interfering with Polish nuns on Polish soil. Jews should feel free to pray at Auschwitz, but so should Catholics—and the matter should rest at that.

For the sake of fairness, I must stress that nobody had explained the Jewish position to the Poles. True, the secretary of the Polish Episcopate's Commission for a Dialogue with Judaism presented both sides of the issue quite clearly in an article published in the official bulletin of the Episcopate, but few people read that publication. So when Cardinal Glemp made his infamous speech in Czestochowa late in August, he was speaking to a receptive audience.

Glemp provided what one might call a complete list of Polish prejudices against the Jews. He started by stating that Poles had suffered "trauma," caused by "war-time events," which affected their attitude toward "Germans and Jews." He criticized the Jews for "speaking from the position of a nation elevated above all others," which "makes on us impossible demands" (that is, the implementation of the Geneva agreement). These demands "infringe on our sovereignty achieved with such pain," while "the media, easily at the Jews' disposal," provoke "anti-Polonism." "If there will be no anti-Polonism, there will be no anti-Semitism," stated Poland's Cardinal, confirming what many Poles had denied all along, namely, that Polish anti-Semitism *does* exist. Glemp continued by stating that Weiss's actions had "not [led] to the murder of nuns or to the wrecking of the convent, for the attackers were held at bay, but do not call them heroes." Weiss has since threatened to sue for libel—a threat which helped convince Glemp to cancel a scheduled trip to the U.S. this fall.

Even now that the controversy over the Carmelite convent is dying down, the problem of Polish anti-Semitism remains.

Two days after Glemp's speech, *Gazeta* ran an editorial criticizing the Cardinal. "We listened to the words of the Cardinal with pain and sorrow," wrote Catholic intellectual Krzysztof Sliwinski. Citing the Gospel which demands that one must first make peace with one's brethren before making an offering at the altar (Matthew 5:23-24), Sliwinski concluded: "No matter how difficult it is and how unjustly we may feel accused by those who hold a grudge against us—first go and make peace."

The Solidarity newspaper's preaching the Gospel to the Cardinal created quite a stir in Poland. Privately, most leading personalities agreed with Sliwinski and even went further in their criticism. "The Cardinal's words are deplorable, but should be attributed to his well-known stupidity," a leading Catholic politician told me. "Even so," he continued, "the bundling of Germans and Jews together is an incredible outrage." Lech Walesa, speaking a few days later in Gdansk, declared, "If we want to be honest and be good Christians, we cannot forget the price the Jewish people paid during the war." Walesa also announced his support for the Geneva agreement. The popular Solidarity leader, Wladyslaw Frashniuk, told a French journalist that he was "red-faced with shame" upon hearing Glemp's words.

But again, *Gazeta* readers felt differently. *Gazeta* de-

(Continued on p. 92)

My Daughter and Arafat

Yael Gvirtz

My daughter is ready to talk with Arafat. With anyone, for that matter, so long as there'll be peace. She'd also prefer, she says, to see Peres replace Shamir. Why? Because the Labor party, she says, my little nine-year-old, has a plan that says talk is essential. "But Shamir also has a plan," I counter. "Well," she answers, "but he's always talking about who he *isn't* ready to talk with." We're on muggy, end-of-the-summer Tel Aviv streets. Israelis will remember this as a bad summer—a series of disasters and calamities on the national level (we still don't naturally distinguish between public and private in Israel), and tragedies like the 405 bus, which was cast into a canyon on its way to Jerusalem.

My youngest son glides ahead of us on his skateboard. Not yet six, he's wearing sneakers and cutoffs like a beach brat anywhere in the world. The upper part of his body is athletic and tanned. His back is the reason for this political conversation I'm having with my daughter. "Mom," she says, "I don't want him to go to the army." Twelve years separate that back from the draft; already at the moment of his birth I'd felt a need to protect him.

I grew up on a kibbutz, a quarter of an hour from Tel Aviv. There wasn't any television then in Israel. The adults listened to the radio a lot and read the papers. We never really knew our leaders, apart from our parents' way of talking about them. We related to the country's leaders emotionally, not strategically. I was born in 1954, and between then and now we've been through several wars. People always talked about how one day they'd disband the army, and we grew up hoping for that day, in the way that elsewhere people grow up thinking, "They'll get over it before the wedding."

My daughter lives in Tel Aviv. She watches television. She was too young for the war in Lebanon, and so the intifada is her first experience of war. Her experience is very different from mine. Her war is served up to her with dinner. And that war looks awful on television. War like David and Goliath. More than a little ridiculous, and maybe more threatening because of that. And my daughter, looking through her conceptual dictionary, which she compiled between 1980 and 1989, doesn't believe that the IDF will ever be relieved of its duty to fight. And she certainly doesn't believe that Shamir will bring peace.

Yael Gvirtz writes on Israeli politics and society for the Israeli newspaper Hadashot.



The strongest desire my children have expressed this past year is the desire to fly. They envy their friends and cousins who get to travel abroad. More than anything else, they want to fly. I try to understand their desire on an emotional level, which involves our generational differences. When I was a little girl, I wanted more than anything else to ride on one of the trucks or buses that came onto the kibbutz from time to time. There was something especially tempting in the rush and noise of passing cars traveling toward Tel Aviv on the main highway. Away. And now I try to follow out this line: the plane replaces the bus. And anyway children always want to travel, until the vehicle that's supposed to take them away from the house stops in front of the door. I've even thought of taking them on a plane ride over Tel Aviv. There's a company that offers excursions like that to tourists for a reasonable price. But they want to get further away—abroad. And my son says that we should fly to America because "there are a lot of skateboards there and you don't have to serve in the army."

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And my two little pacifists, whose mother and father both served in the IDF, simply no longer believe in the kind of slogans with which we grew up. These practical little people don't feel that we're talking about defending our homeland. They understand the suffocation, the injustice, the anguish, and the not-at-all-funny absurdity of the situation. And they'd rather leave. Break free.

Maybe there were earlier indications. Unlike their parents, my children stubbornly refused to be enthusiastic about get-to-know-your-country trips. They've never once gotten excited about a hill covered with winter flowers. The State of Israel, for them, is Tel Aviv. And even so, that's sometimes too much for them. They're bored by the political closeup that the television now offers them. Among the Tel Aviv graffiti they read on the wall: "Shamir [in Hebrew the word means dill] just in soup." If it were up to them, they'd replace the closeup with imported children's shows. In the interest of normality.

The big summer heat wave, the *sharav,* will break soon. A new school year will begin, and the minister of education—the head of the firefighters' union, as it were—will announce a bombastic and boring new national program such as "Education for Democracy," "Respecting Human Rights," or "The War Against Highway Accidents." And the belated foam they'll spew there will supposedly sanitize our thinking, purify our heads. Like a shampoo without water. And my daughter will continue to come back from school with horrible jokes like: "What's the difference between an Arab that's been run over and a cat that's been run over?" And for you, far away from all this poison, it will no doubt be hard to guess that the correct answer is "Next to the cat's body there are skid marks."

With the opening of the school year come the fall holidays. What the Tel Aviv poet Abraham Khalfi called "a Jewish autumn in the Land of Israel." Rosh Hashanah, Simkhat Torah, Yom Kippur. There's something poignant in this combination for secular Israelis also, because the wind shifts suddenly from the south, mixing the scents of the orange groves and those of the sea. If there's an authentic Mediterranean scent, it's that of this sweet, salty spice which, every autumn, breaks the heart with love of the land. And there's a certain flower, the squill, which rises up just as autumn comes in. The squill is part of my landscape, just as it's part of the arabesques of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian writer Anton Shamas. This squill, by the way, is one of the oldest surviving species here, because its bulb is bitter and the goats won't eat it. Therefore, the poet Natan Yonatan told me, when they buried his first-born son, Leor, after the Yom Kippur War, he planted only squill next to the grave. Sometimes I wonder if the scent I mentioned is an actual scent or just an association. My children, for instance, can't smell it. They are ready to fly immediately.

"I," my daughter says, "am ready to talk with Arafat. The problem is that Shamir is not." □

First There Was Light and That Begins the Narrative

Barbara Goldberg

Then there was hunger, then
there was blame. Even God must
be ambivalent about knowing.

We know what happens to travelers
their first day out—shame,
exaltation. Fingerthick dust

on trees invites them to leave
a mark. When Adam knew Eve
she bore him Cain, *Kaniti,*

acquisition. Adam, for the moment
so besotted by birth, he forgives
everything. Next Abel, wet-breath,

not lasting. Who can fault Eve
for preferring him? How sweet
to adore the one who most wholly

responds. The boys spend childhood
bickering, Cain, grim, tenacious,
burdened by the weight of expectation,

and Abel, lighthearted and wily.
He has no need to hoard. When God
reenters the story, Cain will rise up

against his brother, quarrel over
God's affection, poor substitute
for mother love. First

there was light and that began
the narrative. All events,
a fulfillment. Even mistakes.

But All Men Are Brothers, Bogdan K.: A Memoir

Joseph Edelman

I.

Last night at the opera two superb artists performed, Valery Panov and his lovely Galina—until recently, and for two years prior, under virtual house arrest in the city of Leningrad. Victims of stupid, wicked men, they emerged large on the world scene. There was a standing ovation, and a dozen curtain calls.

Observing them brought on sad meditations of past history and of events not quite so remote. I began to put these reflections down on paper, but the going became difficult. Tragedy does not tell easily. As my mind wandered, there were many fortuitous circumstances and some blessed ones, small compensation against the abominations I shall relate.

The blessed ones began many years ago and, of all places, inside a taxicab. Having reached my destination, the Ambassador-East, I leaned over to grasp my raincoat and umbrella when the cab door suddenly was flung open and a superlatively decked-out doorman with an enormous umbrella gave a helping hand to a young woman who, seemingly unaware of my presence, promptly sat down beside me. Suddenly she turned, gaping at me with eyes of alarm, and it was obvious she was not playing games. There was a heavy downpour, cabs were scarce, and the harassed doorman in all likelihood hadn't noticed me. As I said, that is how it all began.

I looked at my fellow passenger and she at me. In order to clarify these bewildering events, I must declare at once that she was beautiful. She was also very young, a child-like curiosity her dominant trait. She had still another salient feature, rarely seen among our contemporaries: she had eyes, dark eyes with sloping lids, about as eloquent as any eyes I had seen until then, my twenty-seventh year of life. What struck me also was her pale, ivory complexion crowned by a colorful turban—virtually a miniature pagoda—and her shining black hair, which cascaded to shoulder length. All this I caught in a fleeting moment, along with her blush of astonishment to find me sitting there beside her. It was incumbent upon me to utter the first word.

"Where to, my pretty young lady?"

"Oh..." she hesitated, visibly perturbed. "Oh, I'm going home."

"And where is home?" I asked.

This information I conveyed to the cabbie, and off we went, the beginning of a long adventure. She smiled diffidently, then reddened—the first change of expression. There was also a trace of a quiver at the corner of her full red lips, and this seemed to animate her eyes even more. A faint suggestion of coquetry broke through.

"It must be miles out of your way," she said, eyeing me quizzically. I returned her inspection of me, observing a delicate refinement and distinctively good taste in everything she wore, especially the coral accompaniments of a Chinese ideograph pieced together on both turban and frock. She was obviously not Chinese, that I could see, yet characteristics of a flower-like Oriental seemed to emanate from her.

It would be pointless to relate our conversation. Actually, I parried her several questions, and as I look back I can only recall that I tried to give an aura of mystery to my person. This was hardly fair, as she was quite outspoken—she said she was eighteen and had only recently matriculated at the University, attending classes there in the mornings and at the Art Institute in the afternoons. A rather heavy program, I said.

The storm had not abated, and when the taxi drew up in front of a yellowish brick house on a tree-lined street not too far from where I had my own modest digs, I did what I felt proper. I escorted her with my protective umbrella to the very doorstep. It was only then, walking beside her in the driving rain, that I observed how exquisitely petite she was. My behavior, as one can see, was absolutely correct.

As I was about to take leave, she appeared somewhat disconcerted. Pausing, she said something which I couldn't make out, then somewhat shyly murmured, "Would you like to come in out of the rain?"

II.

The second episode of this curious tale took place inside the yellowish brick house. A tall, lean man in a dark suit came into the living room soon after we made

Joseph Edelman is a lawyer (retired). His short stories, articles, memoirs, and poetry have appeared in various publications.

our appearance. He scrutinized me as though I were an applicant for a security job at Fort Knox where our gold reserves are stashed away. Acknowledging our introduction with a curt nod, he straightaway invited me into the dining area where, as it soon turned out, I was to undergo an artless cross-examination. Unquestionably, if I were to offer a fair description, I would say he was a handsome man of forty-five I should have guessed, a cross between pictures I've seen of Turgenev and the more sanguine features of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, for he looked the very part of a Russian intellectual cast for a Hollywood role. The first words he spoke confirmed he was Russian, with that unmistakable accent and frequent omission of article and pronoun and much else besides. I shan't try to record the verities of his accent on paper; it would make all this too difficult for both reader and writer. Removing his pince-nez glasses and staring me down, he directed his first question to my now uneasy self.

"You lif een city?" he inquired.

"Yes, not too far from here."

"An wat you do?"

"I'm a lawyer," I said reluctantly.

"Ah, lawyer! You verry young for lawyer."

"I'm a *young* lawyer," I said with a grin, but his austere expression remained immutably fixed.

Fortunately, the examination was interrupted at this turn by the entry of a woman, holding an enormous tray of food and drink. Rather younger than the man, she was his exact counterpart, a warm friendly smile her welcoming gesture. She was tall and fully rounded like Bouguereau's women, but on a somewhat enhanced scale with delicate ivory-white skin, and I saw at once the family resemblance. She held herself proudly erect in the manner of a select officer of the Czar's personal guard. Not for a moment could I challenge that here, beyond question, was a very beautiful woman, either Greek or Roman, definitely classic to the roots of her ancient heritage. But her first words gave off that rugged accent unequivocally Russian.

While mother and daughter set the table with all manner of mouth-watering delicacies, the man of the house continued to survey me. I suppose he wanted to know what manner of suitor his daughter was bringing home. Judging from his disposition, what other thoughts could he have harbored? I seemed to sense in him the hint of an adversary.

"Ah, yes, I like t'esk question," he said, eyeing me with circumspection. "Are you maybe Jew?"

Well, there it was, the everlasting intuitiveness of the anti-Semite. I looked about to see if there were any Russian icons in evidence. There weren't any crucifixes or portraits of favorite saints hanging on the walls. About the only portrait I could see was one of a grandmotherly type in an oval frame staring down at me from the opposite wall. There were also traces in that portrait of those eloquent black eyes with sloping lids, but they were charged in this older woman with a lifetime of history. Now it was my turn to take stock of my interrogator, having had some prior experience with this not always friendly question. Apparently the question was uppermost in his mind. He was not one to mince words with propriety.

"I esk," he went on, "cauze I know Jeweesh family by yoor name. They haf beeg auto accessory factory."

"Yes," I said, rather defiantly. "I am a Jew."

"Ah, verry gude." He drew a long breath, as though that obstacle was finally cast out of the way. Seemingly to put me at ease, if such a man could ever really put one at ease with his penetrating glare, he then said, "Vee too—vee Jews."

She laughed as though her laughter might wash away all those accumulated sorrows.

That was the *coup de grâce*. I had reckoned with an enemy, for everything about these people seemed alien to what are recognizably the insignia of Jews.

As we sat facing each other during this exploratory inquisition, I noticed that from time to time he removed little squares of colored blotting paper from his vest pocket. He would bring the paper to his nose, take a mild whiff, then write down a word or two inside a small notebook and continue on as though nothing had happened. This he did a score of times during this strange meeting, until my curiosity got the better of me. Turning tables, I finally said, "Why do you do that?"

"I chemeest," he replied. "I make essences—parfumes. Ve haf thousand formulas—but nose ees best," and he touched his nose to demonstrate. "You tell me, yes, how you like better—dis or dat?"

He gave me two tiny squares. I took a deep whiff of each and said I preferred the blue one.

"You haf gude nose. Now ve haf drink. First ve eat zakuska (Russian hors d'oeuvres), den vee drrink. Always eat first, den drink—eat—drink—Americans not know how t'drrink."

The glasses were large for hard liquor—100-centigram glasses he called them (about 3½ ounces), and I certainly was not in training for this manner of combat. Instinctively, I felt he was putting me through a trial by battle, or vodka, as the case might be, to see what lurked beneath my informal suit of clothes.

The women sat at the same dining table, partaking of

the succulent delicacies. There were plates of fresh, thinly sliced cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes, onions (green and non-green)—all seasoned with tingling herbs and spices; then, in the pickled family, an array of watermelon, artichokes, peppers, and olives (green and black)—with a delectable spread of tarama, humus, dolmas, and tiny sausages steeped in garlic. There were four or five cheeses, a fresh-smelling pumpernickel with sweet butter, and—oh, yes—above and beyond, and surmounting this banquet, two large bottles of vodka, 100 proof and with authentic labels indicating their origin from that "heavenly utopia"—the USSR.

My host filled the glasses to their top, while the women sat passively by, nibbling away. They were not participants in this contest, only observers, like those women of ancient Rome cheering on a favorite gladiator from their sanctuary, daring neither by sign nor word to voice disapproval. From every expression of this stern-looking character with the pince-nez glasses, it was clear he was total master of the household, while his womenfolk, mother and daughter, seemed guarded at his very glance.

He drank down the first glass in one long gulp, saying something in Russian which sounded to my untutored ears like *nazdrovna*. Meekly, very meekly, and I might add unskillfully, I followed the same routine. Incidentally, this was my first experience with vodka, or any other hard liquor for that matter. My father and his fathers before him were drinkers of wine, and that in utmost moderation, for Jews generally are not given to heavy drinking.

Glass number two he filled to its brim. After drinking it down and noting my apelike complicity, he said, "Ees custoom t'drink trree glassess. Old vorld custoom." He then proceeded to fill glass three, mine actually spilling over onto the fine madeira tablecloth beneath.

Glass number three met the same dismal fate of its predecessors. As for me, I suppose all I can say in my own defense, if defense is necessary, is that there was something about this challenging man which brought out all my fighting spirit. The truth is I was not then, nor since, what is commonly referred to as a drinking man. Then, too, I've never considered it a virtue. But my host remained impassive as before, absorbing lethal doses and showing not the slightest sign of intemperance.

Within moments of this ritual assault I felt rather groggy in the head, but this definitely was not the case with my challenger. Not a muscle of his handsome face flickered. This was not the case with me. Actually something unprecedented was happening. A nasty imp—I don't know his or her identity—put a clamp to the back of my head and kept tightening the bolt. Another strange event followed almost in sequence: the portrait of the grandmotherly lady with magnificent eyes began swaying pendulum-like across the wall, and in my one-hundred-proof alcoholic predicament, all I could remember was a phrase from Byron which kept repeating, "All farewells should be sudden."

I got up to go. To the moment of this writing I don't know how I did it, but I shook hands with host, hostess, and their darling daughter, bid them a thousand thanks, interjecting words like *nazdrovna* for no accountable reason, bowing, scraping, and saying *pazalsta* (please) and *spasiba* (thank you) with all the gracious et ceteras. Then, with superhuman effort and a prayer to the Almighty, I made a beeline for the door. How I made my way home I shall never know. All I remembered of that memorable bout when I awoke in my bed some twenty hours later, fully clothed and with shoes still unlaced, was that I had taken a cab to the Ambassador-East to meet my SOB boss but was somehow diverted along the way in a driving rainstorm.

III.

If it were not for the third episode, which I am now recalling, there would be a wide gap in this narrative. It would simply be an account of boy meets girl and some quaint circumstances of their encounter. Nothing more. But the canvas is infinitely larger.

Within days after our first confrontation, my fellow passenger appeared in the reception room of the factory law firm where I had been incarcerated for some eighteen months and asked to see me. My secretary—an obstreperous old maid with bovine eyes and features best described as vinegary, a woman who could abide neither youth nor beauty—acted as sentry, demanding to know the young lady's business. The young lady insisted it was personal, and a clash of words followed. Barring entrance to my miserable little office, my secretary put on her fighting mitts. It was at this phase of battle that Mr. SOB (all the young men thus referred to him), senior partner of the firm, entered the reception hall and came upon the clash of these two battling females. He interceded, escorting the young lady in person directly to my solitary enclave. She must have made a marked impression, for his manners were exemplary and, what is more, without precedent. During the entire period of my confinement, this was his first entry into my working quarters.

I have related the circumstances of our second meeting since they throw additional light on my fellow passenger and the effect she had on some members of the human race, limited in the main to the masculine gender. The behavior of my boss was all the more inexplicable since he had affection, as everyone seemed to know, for only

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SAYING GOODBYE TO THE EIGHTIES
(WITHOUT MUCH REGRET)

We aren't so foolish as to think that social reality fits into neat packages corresponding to calendar decades. But the eighties did see the consolidation of trends that will set the terms for life in the early nineties. It's a good moment to reflect on where we are and where we could be. This special section articulates a variety of views, not necessarily our own. We will continue the discussion in our January/February issue.

Looking Forward to the Nineties

Michael Lerner

The eighties make most sense when seen as the latest battle in a war that began in the sixties. The major political actors of the eighties shaped their worldviews in response to the struggles of the sixties. The key question faced by American elites was how much of the sixties-generated "damage" to their power and class rule could be repaired through the Reagan-Bush counterrevolution. The constraints that these elites faced in Nicaragua, for example, they blamed on "the Vietnam syndrome"—the lingering anti-interventionist consciousness that had been produced by the antiwar movement of the sixties. Similarly, the massive resistance they faced in attempting to institutionalize key elements of "the Reagan revolution" stemmed from a lingering political awareness fostered by the social change movements of the sixties and seventies. The story of the eighties, then, is the continuing saga of those movements—how they were weak enough to let the eighties happen with Reagan, Bush, and the forces of reaction in the driver's seat; how they remained powerful enough to make the eighties less terrible than they might have been.

Part of the battle of the eighties was about how to think of the sixties. It was important for those on the Right to define the powerful hopes for social transformation that millions of people had experienced in the sixties and early seventies as some form of delusion. The idealism and optimism *had* to be mistaken—otherwise it would be impossible to create a world safe for the elites of wealth and power who engineered and benefited from the Reagan revolution. So the battle was waged on every possible front. The political programs of the sixties were redefined as "throwing money at every problem." (In fact, the poverty programs failed, at least in part, because this society was never prepared to fund full employment or to create adequate housing or to rebuild cities that were already in sharp decay in the sixties. The money that was "thrown" ended up expanding government services to ameliorate the worst effects of poverty rather than financing a radical program to eliminate it.) The struggle for civil rights, for women's liberation, and for the rights of the aged, the poor, and the handicapped were all redefined as struggles for "special interests." The Republicans' successful effort to take from the poor and add to the wealth of the rich was defined as "the general interest."

Perhaps the greatest propaganda victory for the defenders of the established order was the creation of the category of "yuppies"—the young urban professionals who had supposedly abandoned their sixties idealism, "grown up," and begun frantically pursuing the "realistic" goals of personal success and material gratification. The reality was much more complex and ambiguous. Beyond some attachment to rock culture, long hair, and marijuana, the majority of the eighties yuppies had had little sustained contact with the movements of the sixties—so the step into self-indulgence in the eighties was not necessarily a break with the values that they had held earlier.

But for many others who *had* been activists or who *had* participated in the consciousness revolution of the sixties, the legitimate desire to build a family, own a home, develop a career, and even enjoy good food or attractive clothing was not necessarily counterposed to remaining true to the social justice values that they held in the sixties. Many of the millions of people whose lives were profoundly shaped by the movements of the sixties and early seventies remained committed to the same values. The brilliance of the Right's propaganda victory in the eighties lay in its ability to make these people invisible to each other. As a result, even when the activists were mobilized in specific successful struggles (against intervention in Nicaragua, against Reagan's nuclear policies, or against the Bork nomina-

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tion), they were unable to recognize themselves as a continuing force in American politics and culture.

The media played a major role in shaping a process of collective historical amnesia. Movies, television shows, and media commentators continually fostered a misremembering of the past in which the massive struggles for social change were either trivialized or ignored. The attempt to portray the anti-imperialist impulses of the sixties as nothing more than a collective psychosis ("the Vietnam syndrome"), the attempt to reduce the counterculture critique of the deadening conformism characteristic of daily life to nothing more than rock concerts and drugs, the attempt to explain the great political advances as products of individual heroes (the civil rights movement's struggles being reduced to the heroism of Martin Luther King), the attempt to recredit a mythology of an older American community allegedly full of traditional values and happy families that had supposedly been destroyed by the individualism of the sixties—all of this misremembering helped shape an eighties generation of young people who had never experienced the dynamism of the sixties and who came to believe that this dynamism had been largely misguided. Simultaneously, it undermined the potential pride that those in their thirties and forties might feel at having (1) generated a set of social movements in the sixties and seventies that stopped the war in Vietnam and made it harder for the U.S. to engage in similar adventures in the eighties; (2) eliminated the worst forms of legal racism, sexism, and heterosexism while making substantial advances towards equal rights for women and gays in the economy; (3) created a virtual revolution in the relationships between the sexes; (4) awakened the country to the impending ecological catastrophe; and (5) established a series of entitlements for the elderly and the handicapped that made their lives substantially less perilous.

The Right's ability to gain power and retain it through the eighties, along with the relative success of the venture to marginalize the spirit of idealism and replace it with an ethos of narrow self-interest, can only be understood in the context of continuing self-defeat characteristic of the liberal and progressive forces. Both the left and right wings of the Democratic party misunderstood why the party lost power, and both persisted in framing their alternatives in ways that would ensure the continuing dominance of the Republicans and the Right. For Democratic party right-wingers (who cleverly described themselves as "centrists") the problem was that the Democrats had not become sufficiently like Republicans, so the task was to remake their party as born-again Reagan clones with greater sensitivity to the economic needs of working people. Bush's move toward the center has effectively blocked this strategy for the nineties, though the Democrats may nevertheless try it. The left wing of the party tried to revive the old-time religion of economic populism, but in a way that would not frighten the corporate donors who have become indispensable for congressional, senatorial, and presidential campaigns.

None of these folks could even begin to address the realities that made the eighties counterrevolution possible: the fact that most people involved in the sixties had, at a certain moment, lost faith in what they were doing; and that most people in the country had been alienated by the social change movements even though they tended to accept some parts of these movements' analyses. The Democrats and those in the social change movements have not yet understood why they lost the confidence of the American people—and yet it was this loss of faith in their own mission coupled with the American people's lingering anger at the Left that paved the way for Reagan. This phenomenon also made it possible for conservatives to paint a picture of the past that decreased the attractiveness of progressive politics to such an extent that by the 1988 elections the very word "liberal" could become a liability.

That loss of faith in their own mission was central to the collapse of the movements for social change. Those movements embodied some of the most idealistic energy this country has ever seen harnessed in political action, yet they bought into a meritocratic fantasy that allowed little room for compassion either for themselves or anyone else. Products of the first post-World War II generation that had grown up in a period of relative affluence, the activists of the sixties and early seventies bought the dominant worldview of American society ("You can make it if you really try") and applied that to their own efforts to revolutionalize American society. Just as most Americans felt terrible about themselves for failing to "make it" economically—interpreting the class structure as a reflection of their own personal failures—so the movement activists came to feel that their failure to construct a less oppressive set of social relations overnight (less competitive, less sexist, less racist, less egocentric) was proof of the shortcomings of their own vision. Lacking any serious social or psychological theory of the forces that might limit instantaneous transcendence (the movement analogue to the instantaneous gratification of material and sexual desires promised by the capitalist marketplace), social change activists lacked the compassion for themselves that could sustain them through the necessarily prolonged struggle to transform America. Instead of recognizing that any democratic social movement would necessarily be plagued by the same distortions that existed in the larger society (and then creating a safe place for people to work through their own limitations as they engaged in political action), social change activists expected that

the movement would be the embodiment of wonderfulness. They became deeply disillusioned when their own movements could not fully embody the ideals to which they aspired. A ruthlessly self-punishing superego managed to do what repression of the state could not—turn people against themselves (and each other), furious that they could not embody their own highest ideals.

This same lack of compassion was directed at the larger society—at all those who had not yet joined the movement. Those who had not yet been converted to the cause were seen as the enemy, which eventually meant defining most Americans as fundamentally racist, sexist, imperialist, or in other ways essentially evil or stupid. Many Americans may not have ever heard the details of the Left's analysis, nor could many work their way through the rhetoric that was being thrown at them. What these Americans certainly *could* do was detect the contempt being directed at them. They could feel that they were being disrespected.

They heard from the Left that their lingering concerns about economic security, their newer concerns about the quality of their lives, and the pain that they felt at the breakdown of their families and the stressful experiences of the workplace were all either forms of self-indulgence or manifestations of a deep and oppressive cultural conservatism. ("How can you worry about your standard of living when so many Black people domestically and people of color around the world are in so much worse shape?" Or, "Your talk about the breakdown of the family is nothing more than a cover for your desire to perpetuate oppressive and patriarchal family structures in which women are inherently subordinate.")

A central problem here was that liberals and the Left retained an economistic or vulgar Marxist conception which understood the only *real* human needs to be economic. The oppression of Blacks or women or the poor could be legitimated because these groups were being economically deprived, and the struggle for equal rights was ultimately a struggle for economic empowerment. Yet what was actually happening in America was that many working people who had achieved a standard of living far surpassing that available to any past generation felt that their lives were painful and oppressive. Why was this so? Because the actual cost of "making it" in America was the development of a highly individualistic society in which community ties had been replaced by the struggle of each against all. The very ability to manipulate others, so useful for achieving success in the capitalist marketplace, tended to foster a narcissistic personality structure that was highly dysfunctional when it came to building lasting friendships and families. The difficulties that followed in maintaining friendships, loving relationships, families, and communities generated a new set of needs—but these needs were spiritual, psychological, and ethical rather than strictly economic or involved with "political rights."

Most Americans were in real pain. In some important ways their lives were not bringing them the satisfaction and sense of fulfillment that they had thought would come with the purchase of America's consumer goods. Yet the liberals and the Left ignored this pain and dismissed these personal concerns as merely a cover for self-indulgence or for selfishness. Instead, they lectured the American public on the need to share the good life they had supposedly achieved with those who remained economically deprived. Is it any wonder that most Americans felt despised, disliked, denigrated, and misunderstood by the liberals and the Left?

The greatest propaganda victory for the defenders of the established order was the creation of the category of "yuppies."

It was in this climate that the Right made the move that continues to provide it with its mass appeal: it presented itself as the champion of the concerns ignored by the Left. The Right presented itself as a populist champion of the need to build strong families and strong communities, and it called for a commitment to values. Completely ignoring the way that the capitalist system itself fostered the ethos of individualism and materialism that had actually subverted family and community, the Right identified the root of the problem with the climate of permissiveness fostered by the Left's insistence on individual rights, particularly the rights of women and homosexuals.

Unwilling to challenge the destructive impact of the competitive marketplace, the Right provided a compensatory realm in which the alienation of daily life could be overcome through participation in fantasized communities constructed "beyond" politics and economics. These imaginary communities (the nation, the born-again, the anti-abortion movement) offered people a sense that someone or something cared about them. At the same time, these fantasies were a useful distraction from the daily experience of being part of a society whose alienation was dramatically escalating; hence the eighties surge in patriotism and the wistful attempts to nostalgically identify contemporary reality with the romanticized version of small town U.S.A. of the late nineteenth century.

The daily societal frustration of our deep need for mutual recognition and confirmation gave a frenzied

character to the search for these compensatory alternatives. The underlying fear many people felt that these pseudocommunities might not actually provide an adequate alternative to the pain of daily life was quickly repressed and replaced by a growing anger at liberals who—by insisting that individuals had the right to not subordinate their intellect or lifestyles to the will of the larger community—threatened to awaken people from the pleasant trance offered by the Right. The liberal and progressive forces seemed unaware of people's pain, hence had no solutions to offer to it, and seemed both puzzled and contemptuous of people's resistance when the Left offered to bring them back into contact with the painful reality that they were desperately seeking to escape. That these same liberals seemed to be living lives free from similar pain, and that they did not need similar escapes, only reinforced the popular conception that the liberals neither understood nor cared about the rest of the population.

The imaginary communities were constituted through elaborate public rituals and encouraged a psychological "splitting" between the "good" members of the community, who adhered to correct forms of behavior or thought, and the "bad" others who were not part of the saved and who might need to be destroyed ("the evil empire," gay or feminist "destroyers of the family," the pro-choice movement, etc.). The desperate need for a way to feel good about increasingly painful lives found expression for some in an increasing reliance on drugs and alcohol; others sought religious escape and promises of salvation; still others turned to the "feel good" vision of America that was offered by the Reagan/Bush Right. The Left was unable to see that behind this escapism and massive denial was a pervasive pain that permeated daily life. Instead they tended to see Americans as merely self-indulgent and willfully self-deluded. That allowed the Right to address that pain, even in ways that simultaneously narcotized it while actually strengthening the societal mechanisms that were its root causes.

The Right's ability to link its economic defense of the elite interests with its cultural championing of the needs of most Americans was never challenged in any serious way by the Left during the past three decades. The victory of Reagan and then later of Bush was analyzed entirely in terms of their success at manipulating the media, their superior skills as communicators, and their larger campaign budgets. At best, analysts pointed out how the Democrats did not effectively restate their economic message of caring for the dispossessed. The liberal analyses of their own defeats, repeated in the mass media, essentially implied that the majority of Americans were too stupid or evil to respond to the Left, and that better mechanisms of manipulation were needed. Needless to say, this only further confirmed the suspicions of most Americans that liberals and the Left have nothing but contempt for them, precisely the suspicion that makes it possible for them to support liberal programs and positions but to vote for Republicans or right-wingers nevertheless. Americans may not follow every nuance of political analysis, but they certainly know when they are being disliked or demeaned. While they may agree with the liberal Left on this or that point, they don't really trust the Left and hence are no longer willing to give it power to implement its platform.

With the social change movements locked into ways of formulating their politics that ignore these deep needs of the American public, the best they can hope for is to block the continuing advance of the Right. In other words, the progressive movements have become defensive movements—to stop nuclear arms escalation, to block the appointment of bad justices from the Supreme Court, to defend the right to choice or other previously won civil liberties. A new vision becomes impossible because the social forces that could renew our society have not yet come to grips with their own defeat. Nor have they understood that it will require a fundamentally different approach to politics in the nineties for the liberal and progressive forces to manage anything more than a sideshow.

Yet that possibility of a new politics and a new cultural orientation for the nineties should not be discounted. No matter how successful it was at capturing power in the eighties, the Reagan revolution has not been able to extinguish the lingering hopes kindled by the sixties—nor has it been able to dislodge the popular support for anti-racist, anti-sexist, and pro-human rights struggles that were central to the agenda of the sixties. Faced with the potential dissolution of his presidency in light of the Iran-contra scandal, Ronald Reagan turned to the nuclear disarmament agenda of the Left and attempted to recredit his presidency by making a new accommodation with what he had previously denounced as "the evil empire." George Bush promised a "kinder and gentler" America in order to co-opt the spirit of idealism that had found imperfect but nevertheless visible expression in the Jackson campaign and in the last weeks of the Dukakis campaign.

The Right won important battles in the eighties, but the struggle continues on many fronts. That battle looms large whenever the dominant culture tries to convince us that movement for social change is neither possible nor desirable, that selfishness is "real" and "idealism" is silly, that most of what we did in the past to change things was either misguided or counterproductive, that we can't count on each other and so should just worry about ourselves.

What would make it possible for liberal and progressive forces to win more support in the nineties? Without abandoning the struggle for economic justice and political empowerment, we need a politics that addresses the deep psychological, ethical, and spiritual crises of this society. Of course, it would include the normal litany of liberal demands for justice and equality on behalf of those most obviously oppressed. But its special focus would be the way the pain people experience in daily life is rooted in the social structures of our society. Such a politics would ask *why* it feels harder to sustain friendships or families today, *why* so many people are attracted to drugs, *why* ethical values are in decline, *why* people don't trust each other, and *why* it's so hard to get people to make sacrifices to build communities of meaning and purpose that transcend their own immediate needs. A liberal and progressive movement that seemed to recognize and care about the daily life experience of most Americans, that bothered to notice people's pain and frustrations, and that helped others overcome self-blame by seeing how their problems are socially rooted would quickly gain the allegiance it needs to bring about dramatic and human social change. The more it helped people feel compassion for themselves, the more it would empower people to become politically involved.

Such a movement, aiming to foster compassion, could focus on a variety of daily-life issues. A progressive pro-family coalition, for example, could be powerful if it went beyond the normal economic demands of the Left and talked about what makes it hard for people to build strong families and lasting commitments. Such talk would inevitably address the need to restructure the world of work in order to make it more humanly fulfilling; it also would begin to challenge the entire logic of the competitive marketplace. These issues could be concretely addressed by "work stress" or "family support" groups modeled on the small consciousness-raising groups that facilitated the growth of the women's movement in the late sixties. While a progressive pro-family coalition would advance political programs, it would have to focus primarily on the attempt to speak to people in ways that help foster a new and more compassionate self-understanding. Otherwise, such efforts would be reduced to legislative programs that seem distant from daily life. A politics that concentrated on the life crises facing most Americans in daily life (and that helped people rethink their personal life experience in the way that the women's movement did) could at once be more radical and more successful than a politics focused more narrowly on the defense of economic and political rights.

A central task for the nineties, this involves what Peter Gabel calls mutual confidence-building—the various ways in which we reassure each other that it really is possible to trust one another and work together. There are many people who still remain true to the values of a just and peaceful society and see through the craziness and self-destructive tendencies of some of those who are attracted to the Left. The fact is that there are a lot of us out there. We need to make it safe to be with each other again, to share and support each other in pursuing our most humane and imaginative dreams, and to believe that we really could change things.

Without a politics that recognizes our need for love, caring, and ethically shaped communities, and that embodies and reflects real compassion, we will defeat ourselves once again.

We are all, each of us, less than we could and should be, and it is likely that when we get together with others we are going to let each other down in some ways. There will be people who speak too long, people who are on ego trips, people who are sexist or racist or anti-Semitic, people who use us to gain power, people with silly or mistaken ideas, and people whose own neuroses make them act in ways that are disruptive to the harmony we need to create.

A compassionate movement would be one that allowed for and expected these backslidings and that trained us in the skills of group dynamics so that we could gently and lovingly but also firmly prevent these kinds of people from dominating or destroying the mutual trust that we badly need. If we could then extend that spirit of compassion outward to others, we might convince them that we were no longer judging them as "bad people." This might make it possible for them to move beyond approving of our ideas to a point where they might trust us as a social movement. This isn't a question of adopting a new slogan or a better technology—it means a dramatic shift in how liberals and progressives approach the world. But without this shift into a politics that recognizes the primacy of our need for love, caring, and ethically shaped communities, a politics that embodies and reflects real compassion, we will defeat ourselves once again, no matter how many "objective conditions" are on our side in the nineties. □

SAYING GOODBYE TO THE EIGHTIES

Biting the Rubber Bullet

Milton Viorst

Thanks, dear God, that the eighties are just about over! I do not say this irreligiously. On the contrary, I say it as an invocation, in the hope that this, perhaps the most shameful decade in the history of the Jews, will give way to something a little more worthy of us, or at least a little more worthy of what we always thought we were. I remember that Bobby Kennedy once said, rather ruefully, that he didn't have a Jewish sense of humanity in his gut; he had to learn it. Well, what happened to that Jewish sense of humanity in the 1980s? It vanished. What the world is learning from us as the eighties come to an end is how to use Uzis to protect drug markets, how to swing a baseball bat to break the bones of an adolescent boy, how to carry off a clean kidnapping on a sunny day.

It's not just that the Israelis now do these things routinely but that the rest of us, most notably our own crowd here in America, stand by and applaud. Or if we do not applaud, we stand silent—and didn't we learn in Hebrew school that this was worse, because s/he who stands around silent in the presence of evil is an accomplice? It's been a terrible decade, not—this time—because Jews died, thank God (though we're used to dying, and we've survived), but because we lost our spiritual compass (and that never happened to us before, so I can't predict how it will turn out).

I'm sitting here, for example, and looking at a copy of the *Jerusalem Post* that arrived in the house a few weeks ago and I can't believe what I'm reading. It's a story about two rabbis—not just any rabbis but the chief Sephardic rabbi and the chief Ashkenazic rabbi of Israel—and they're having a heavy theological disagreement. I once imagined that theological disagreements among great Jewish scholars turned on such questions as the nature of God or, at the least, the demands He imposes in the name of righteousness. This debate is about whether the Jews have a holy commandment to expel the Arabs from Palestine. Imagine! Rabbi Yosef, the Sephardi, who is playing the good guy, says the wise men agree (he cites Rashi, Numbers, and the Sanhedrin) that Jews have an obligation to seize the land but not necessarily to rid it of its inhabitants. The reason, he explains, is that such rough stuff risks military defeat and might cost Jewish lives. Rabbi Goren, the Ashkenazi, is not such a sissy. He contends that Jews have a religious obligation (as his authorities he takes Nachmanides, Deuteronomy, and Maimonides) to go the whole way, notwithstanding the risk to life. According to the *Post,* Goren insists there is clear proof in the religious texts that an optional war to expel the Arabs supersedes the preservation even of Jewish life.

Once upon a time, the doctrines of Zionism were thought to be humane. The early Zionists repeatedly said that their efforts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine would do no harm to the Arabs living there. Zionism was said to be innocent, peaceful, respectful of the boundaries that neighbors would set not only around their homes but around their minds. In retrospect, it's obvious that the old Zionists were lying—if not to the world then to themselves. Still, this early Zionist line brought comfort to Jews and, perhaps more important, imposed some restraint on several generations that came to settle the land. All such restraint eroded rapidly after the Six Day War; by the 1980s, little was left of it in the majority culture of the Jews, in Israel or out. Now Jews routinely blow up the homes and mock the minds of their neighbors. And such behavior seems normal, even vital (we are told) to the defense of Judaism. But few Jews ask whether this has become a Judaism that is worthy of defense.

I used to think that rabbis might serve as a seawall against this erosion of self-discipline. I thought that their role was to teach Jews how to behave decently toward their fellow man. I was obviously naive. The role staked out by rabbis today is to provide theological justification for the military domination of another people—and even of military expansionism. I am a rarely practicing Jew and I am far from being a religious scholar, but I went by chance to the synagogue on the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av and found in the haftorah for the day God's rebuke to the Judeans. The rebuke, delivered by Isaiah, foresaw that the betrayal of moral teachings would lead to the destruction of the Kingdom. "Put away the evil of your doings," God warned. "Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, obtain justice for the fatherless, plead for the widow. . . . If you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured

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with the sword." And, speaking of Jerusalem, God said, "She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.... Zion shall be redeemed with justice." Admittedly, I have only a smattering of Jewish learning, but I would have said that it never occurred to God that Zion would be redeemed by armies—at least in the absence of justice, to say nothing of mercy. But that is the message proclaimed from the high pulpits of the chief rabbis of Israel to the *bima* of my own synagogue in Washington, D.C. In my younger days, "rabbi" was a term associated with the prophets and wise men of Judaism; now it is associated with Kahane of Kach and Levinger of Gush Emunim, and with the conniving leaders of Israel's religious parties who are too concerned with power to give any thought to human morality.

But let me not distort the role of the rabbis, because they are only cheerleaders. The real problem lies with the Jews' armed domination of another people. I hardly need recall that when the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were taken, they were said to be, first, strategic depth for Israel's defense and, second, bargaining chips to be exchanged for peace. Yet since 1967 they have increasingly become a strategic burden, what with uprisings and all, while official and majority Israel insist upon sneering at all talk of peace. It is not just that the domination of 1.5 million people who desperately want their freedom is wrong—profoundly, palpably wrong—but that the spiraling loss of our Jewish soul stems directly from this domination. Domination whets our worst appetites and arouses our basest instincts. The payoff came home to us in the eighties.

The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a despicable act (small matter that it was also strategically wrongheaded). It led ineluctably to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, which were so horrible that we ourselves condemned them, though not horrible enough to teach us a lesson about our limitations. The eighties might be remembered as the decade in which violence in Israel became banal—from the armed resistance at Yamit to the evacuation of the Sinai, the "well-meaning Jewish boys" who organized an underground to kill Palestinian leaders on the West Bank, the patriots who came within a single guard of dynamiting the Temple Mount, the murder by grenade of the peace demonstrator Emil Grunzweig. Not only was this violence condemned so faintly in official circles that the message received was one of approval, but the condemnation could barely be heard over the din of those shouting stridently for still more violence.

Then came the intifada—and it is a rare Jew who has taken the trouble to listen to the cry of pain it embodies. In Washington, AIPAC—the institutionalized Jewish biceps—continues flagrantly to distort the political process, discouraging American officials from any moves toward peace, while liberal Jewish organizations go on courageously condemning South Africa. "Ho hum," say Israelis, unable to contain their indifference, "this silliness in the occupied territories has not disrupted our daily lives. We've barely noticed. So what if nearly seven hundred Palestinians have died? That's their tough luck." Indeed, the violence of armed Jews holding the fortress against political change is far more intimidating to Israelis than are Palestinians throwing stones for freedom. We good Jews in America do our part to preserve the status quo by making sure that Israel's $3 billion subsidy comes uninterrupted, while euphemisms like "rubber bullets" (actually steel balls with a thin rubber coating)—meant to conceal that Israeli boys are ordered to fire on the unarmed—eat away at our collective soul.

This has been perhaps the most shameful decade in the history of the Jews.

I wonder whether Bobby Kennedy was not deceived in believing that we Jews had a sense of humanity in our guts. It was, of course, once a common perception. For centuries, the Jews, whatever criticism came our way, were credited with having a special sensitivity to disadvantaged circumstances, to man's frailty, to social needs. We believed it ourselves, congratulated ourselves for it. We were, after all, the people of Marx and Freud—and Theodor Herzl. We tended, in the absence of any other explanation, to attribute our warm sympathies to our religion—convincing ourselves that Judaism, whatever its shortcomings for the promise of an afterlife, had it all over Christianity, to say nothing of Islam, in worldly concern for God's creatures. Judaism seemed to offer a divine imperative for a caring, earthbound ethic.

The eighties called all of that—to put it charitably—into question. Maybe what was really behind our special sensitivity for all those centuries was the fact that we were an underdog people wherever we lived—and were smart enough to promote a social morality that mitigated the harshness of our own communal life. Maybe what we were really purveying, to others as much as to ourselves, was a doctrine of social self-interest. Considering the fate of many other minorities throughout history, maybe it worked.

But now we're not the underdog anymore. We're not the underdog in America—where we bully around the political system with money and status. And we're certainly not the underdog in the Middle East—where we bring the mentality of an arrogant, self-satisfied master

race to our dealings with our neighbors. Maybe, by some atavistic attitudinal process, we were nice as long as it was useful to us, and now that we no longer need to be, we're no different from the rest of humanity. Okay, maybe it's all right to be no different from the rest of humanity—but I rather liked it that we thought we were, and sometimes really were, a little better. We took it upon ourselves, after all, to be a light unto the nations. Dim as the light has been, the 1980s make the world wonder whether this was ever a serious commitment. Please, dear God, let the 1990s show that it is. □

SAYING GOODBYE TO THE EIGHTIES

Private Pleasures and Public Virtues

Jane DeLynn

A little over a year ago, in the midst of giving me a back rub, my masseur mentioned that he hadn't ejaculated since December 28, 1985.

"What?" I asked.

"That's right," he said. I turned around to look at him: he was beaming. "And I promised the Guy Upstairs I wouldn't either—not until George Bush gets elected."

"You'll have to wait a *long* time then," I said smugly, disregarding the latest polls.

"I did the same thing before Ronald Reagan got elected too," he added, manipulating my shoulder. "And it *worked*. After that, ladies watch out!"

I knew that my masseur, while one of the sweetest guys in the world, had this peculiar Republican quirk (he considers Ronald Reagan *the* president of the century), but even if one disregarded the illogic of his superstitious behavior, it seemed he was carrying Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" a bit too far. On the other hand, Charlie is a person of odd disciplines and excesses, and it somehow fit in with his vegetarianism and 4 A.M. rising time. I said nothing further until the next time I saw him, right before Thanksgiving. "So who was the lucky girl?" I asked.

"I'm waiting till after the inauguration," he responded. "Just to make sure some crazy doesn't put a gun to Bush's head."

My suspicions were confirmed a few months later, when I went to Charlie's and found a bare space where once there had been a mattress on the floor. (The massage table was still there, in the corner.) Charlie confessed he had decided not to bother with a lover after all: between meditation and running (he's a marathon runner), he had neither the time nor the energy. "In fact," he added, "I'm considering never ejaculating again in my whole life."

I'd guessed right. George Bush and Ronald Reagan—much as Charlie genuinely loved them—weren't the reason: they were the *excuse*. Simply put, Charlie didn't want to have sex. Even with himself. Ever.

Initially this sounded bizarre to my sixties-molded mind, but I began recalling things other people had said. For years a gay male friend would announce he had "fallen in love"—only to admit, when pressed for details, that he had never had sex with the person. In fact, most of the time he had never even gone out on a date with the guy. Nor did he want to. It was enough just to think about it in his head.

This friend had certainly had his share, and then some, before alcoholism and the fear of AIDS ended his decade-long party. He was doing the opposite of what one might call "making up for lost time." Or maybe he *was* making up for lost time after all: the lost time of abstention. I have female friends, too, who for various reasons never seem to have lovers. The people they meet are inevitably unavailable: too old, too young, married, gay, living in some inaccessible part of the globe. Admittedly, the older and more picky (or crotchety) one gets, the harder it is to find someone one likes, but still . . . I couldn't recall people of *any* age having these problems in the sixties or seventies.

When I asked people if they were avoiding sex they said no—then proceeded to give me a list of reasons why it wasn't practical to have any. (As of yet, abstinence was not in and of itself acceptable, but had to be shrouded in the language of difficulties and complications.) There was energy—people no longer found it possible to work after a night out on the town—and there was time. In lives filled with work, working out,

The paperback version of Jane DeLynn's third novel, Real Estate, *has just been released by Ballantine Books.*

and attending cultural events such as art openings, book parties, and the like, people wanted to spend their rare free night alone or relaxing with friends. The clear implication was that there was nothing relaxing about being with a potential sex partner. At this point in their lives, it simply wasn't worth the trouble.

Others were burnt out, not just from il/legal substances, but from an endless parade of names and faces—as if the amount of sex a person might ever need in life had a quota, and theirs was all used up. There was age (my friends aren't twenty anymore), and then there was *the* age: diseases and the falling into disrepute of the two great facilitators of casual sex—liquor and drugs.

But there had to be something else: time has a habit of expanding when it needs to—who hasn't done wonders before a deadline?—and the most reliable aphrodisiac is neither liquor nor drugs, but desire.

Desire: I realized I hadn't heard that word in a long time. As for falling in love—even when friends mentioned how nice it would be to live with someone they cared for, they carefully avoided that four-letter word.

People denied that they didn't want sex, but they did say they had lost faith in the "meaningfulness" of intense feelings, and that this loss of faith had led to the actual loss of the feelings themselves—or at least the *pleasure* associated with these feelings. If they were going to have sex, it had to be connected with love. They had little faith, though, in finding that love. If they did, it would be an accident: no more running around searching for the ineffable.

This love they were half-hoping for had little to do with the kind of grand semi-suicidal passions we used to analyze endlessly ten or twenty years ago—even, on occasion, mess up our careers for. (How quaint this sounds!) In its calmness and rationality, this love resembled friendship more than anything else. And indeed, it's the rare occasion in recent years when someone I know actually bothers to inform me of the commencement of a new relationship, let alone mentions—usually with a slightly embarrassed and apologetic air—that he or she has "fallen in love."

Although some of my friends said they missed the old feelings, they didn't seem very upset by their absence. It was as if that love stuff was long ago and far away—for someone younger, more "immature," and still prone to illusions. The attitude was very similar to one that people often have toward their former addictions. My friends, who once resolutely refused to grow up, seemed to be gladly leaping over adulthood directly into advanced middle age—adopting the "Republican" kinds of virtues they so recently had scorned. (Can it be a surprise that golf is the fastest-growing sport in the country?) And it wasn't just sex (and drugs) that had gone out of my friends' lives so much as what these things used to represent: a kind of transportation of the self to realms unreachable in ordinary ways. In fact, they seemed to be avoiding the sex precisely in order to avoid the extraordinary—as if the aim of our lives was suddenly to be as banal, as surface-y, as un-interior, as possible.

In our terror, we seem too easily willing to forgo the joys that come to us only in the dark.

What was happening? Granted, we had "matured," and granted, so many of our friends had died that our experience did, in many ways, resemble that of people middle-aged. But people I knew in their twenties were acting pretty much the same way. They mostly scorned drugs, and "orgy" was a word out of the dim past. These people seemed to be looking for partners as earnestly as people my age had looked a few years ago. Even if they weren't intent on getting married, they dated one person at a time—"serial monogamy," the phrase used to be. What was oddest of all, they didn't seem to regret what they might be missing: there wasn't any jealousy or envy for the good old days. In the peculiar glee of their self-denial, they seemed to be even less ambivalent about their abstentions than were my older friends.

Was it just a standard reaction against what was perceived as previous excesses, or was something being allowed to emerge—something that, in more promiscuous times, would be considered as "shameful" as homosexuality used to be? I thought of the spinster aunts and uncles that abound in the novels of Austen, Trollope, Forster, and Woolf—wonderfully eccentric beings who befriend clergymen, lecture young girls with old-fashioned pieties, bestow unexpected legacies on poor relatives, stand around awkwardly at parties. Lost in the dialectic between the normative family ethos of post-World War America and the normative promiscuity of the sixties and seventies, what was a contemporary Miss Cassewary or Lord de Guest or Lily Briscoe to do—retreat to the closet that gays were so busy emptying? They weren't *allowed* to. They had to wait until AIDS came along to give them an excuse (rather than a reason) not to have sex. Some people accuse Republicans of creating AIDS and/or drug hysteria for their own repressive purposes, but how many lifelong Democrats, I wonder, are secretly grateful for the changes in lifestyle the hysteria has brought about? AIDS for all these people is what the 1988 presidential campaign

was for Charlie.

In the sixties, as I touted the joys of drugs, sex, and Revolution to my parents, my mother assured me in her most irritatingly common-sense manner that "the pendulum always swings back." At the time I scoffed at her old-fashioned notions. Now I see that she was right. Whereas the rhetoric of that decade and the next emphasized feeling and promoted the notion of authenticity—what one might call the primacy of the transcendental private moment—the eighties witnessed a return to more externalized, conservative values. In the past, a concentration on the public self usually ended up by benefiting the traditional recipients of such civic virtues—one's family, one's friends, one's country—but so far, in post-Imperial America, such concentration has meant mostly an exchange of the physical pleasures of sex for the more cerebral ones of career gratification and display (of both objects and one's status).

Maybe, with the return of a more Victorian notion of sexuality, there might also be a return to a Victorian concept of duty. I hope so, if only to help make up for so much that we have otherwise lost. Sex can be "meaningless," of course, as well as "dangerous," but then, what is so "meaningful" about the kinds of things we seem to care about so much nowadays: $200 dinners and great apartments? In our terror—not just of disease but of the strange places sex can transport us to—we seem too easily willing to forgo the joys that come to us only in the dark. □

Saying Goodbye to the Eighties

Bushed and Bewildered

Robert L. Borosage

In his first two hundred days in office, the conservative Republican President of the United States has

- cut off military aid to the contras
- proposed a no-growth military budget
- essentially disavowed Star Wars
- entered into negotiations with the Russians for deep cuts in conventional forces in Europe
- hailed the beginning of the "postcontainment" period
- continued discussions with the PLO and publicly criticized the Israeli government for its intransigence
- signed an international accord on protecting the atmosphere
- focused the economic summit on environmental issues
- detailed a comprehensive overhaul of the Clean Air Act
- endorsed debt relief for the Third World
- forgiven public debts of sub-Saharan African countries
- signed an unprecedented civil rights act for the disabled
- cited the Japanese for trade violations
- supported significant tax credits for the working poor and for day care
- begun to reregulate banks and airlines
- proposed the outlines of an industrial policy

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No, George Bush is not a reborn progressive. Most of these steps are more cosmetic than real; they constitute the minimum necessary to avoid political embarrassment or to defuse a growing crisis. But, folks, say goodbye to the eighties.

Ronald Reagan, the giant of the decade, has all but disappeared from the cultural landscape. As Jimmy Carter gains international stature, we get only glimpses of Reagan—a million-dollar greeter in Tokyo, an incoherent color commentator at the All-Star Game.

Even the highlight scenes from the last decade fade from memory, like dimly remembered clips from B movies. The Gipper at Normandy and Bitburg. Caspar Weinberger foiling the evil empire by buying every weapon the military could imagine. David Stockman and the war on the poor. Paul Volcker and the strong dollar. Nancy and Just Say No. Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. Frank Lorenzo, Ivan Boesky, and greed. Ollie North and his contras.

All seem part of a distant past. Military spending is going down, for the fifth year in a row. The dollar has plummeted, too late to preserve export markets already lost. The Moral Majority has disbanded; Boesky's in jail; Ollie North is doing community service. Greed will always be with us, but it is going out of fashion once again.

To paraphrase Mark Twain: even in Washington,

reality—like hanging—has a way of concentrating the mind. Reality is forcing George Bush to address what is essentially a progressive agenda.

The cold war is waning; the Japanese and Germans appear to have won. New trade blocs are forming as the Communist bloc dissolves. The administration must face a new era of global competition with an economy weakened by debt and dissipation. Environmental degradation is no longer a nuisance, but a major threat to our security. Growing inequality at home not only offends our sense of decency, but undermines our economic future.

A sea change in public opinion reflects these real security concerns. Compare, for example, 1980 with 1988. When Reagan was elected, the public—with "America held hostage"—supported increases in military spending. In 1988, large majorities believe military spending can be cut—to meet new security challenges, to eliminate waste, and to stop subsidizing prosperous allies (and competitors) forty-five years after the war. When Reagan came to office, the pop best-seller on the cover of *Newsweek* was George Gilder's *Wealth and Power,* a paean to the entrepreneur and a plea for dismantling government regulation. Bush's election was accompanied by the similar success of an obscure Yale history professor's book on "imperial overstretch"—David Kennedy's *The Decline and Fall of the Great Powers.*

Bush will continue spending $150 billion a year defending prosperous Europeans from an increasingly implausible threat.

Elite and corporate opinion have also shifted significantly. In 1980, foreign policy elites alarmed by the wave of revolutions in the Third World demanded a more interventionist policy and a military buildup. Corporate elites realized that the new global competition offered a rationale for another offensive against organized labor and government regulation.

By 1989, foreign policy elites consider "getting our economy back in order" the highest priority. Japan and a European market united in 1992 are now acknowledged as serious security concerns. Now that labor has been crippled, corporate leaders recognize the need for new public investments in infrastructure and education. Some corporations recently formed a council to develop a national health care plan, designed to get spiraling health care costs off the corporate balance sheet. Astute corporate leaders accept the need for government initiatives on environmental and consumer protection to quiet public outcry. Savings and loans, and probably commercial banks, need to be bailed out of serious debts.

A Bipartisan Consensus

In Washington, the result is an incipient bipartisan consensus forming around what Bush calls "the status quo plus." The Democratic Congress and the Republican White House increasingly agree on an agenda for change; they differ primarily over how and when that change should occur.

Citizens' organizations and movements have also begun to negotiate the transition. They no longer have Reagan to organize their troops for them. In the 1980s, Reagan presented people concerned about peace, about poverty, about race, about civil liberties, and about the environment with a clear and present danger that mobilized their supporters. Reagan's Supreme Court seems intent on posing a similar threat to the causes of progressive groups, but Bush seeks to co-opt rather than confront.

In co-optation, however, the President legitimates the agenda of cause and lobby groups: consumer and environmental groups can lay claim to the public interest again. Their lobbyists can win small victories in the bipartisan reform agenda and gain foundation and membership support.

A Progressive Challenge

Thus far, no coherent progressive challenge to the "kinder and gentler" centrist consensus has been visible. Democratic legislators and governors are too timid, frozen by phantoms of the past and finances of the present.

When Bush co-opts Democratic issues—such as day care, the environment, the war on drugs, and education—elected Democratic leaders have little to say. They don't want to talk about taxing the corporations and the rich. They don't want to be "weak on defense." They don't want to offend corporate supporters. So they can't challenge Bush on priorities or direction. Instead they're reduced to partisan carping.

But the new bipartisan centrist consensus is intellectually and morally disreputable. It does not meet fundamental challenges to the security of the nation, the economy, or the person. It excludes the interests and the concerns of the vast majority of Americans.

It is also just plain dangerous. Bush and congressional Democrats together gamble that the U.S. has little to lose with a status-quo-plus posture. But the emerging world of trading blocs and bitter economic competition suggests that without a dramatic change in direction, the 1990s could be a mean and dangerous decade. Trade wars threaten national growth. If this country remains wedded to military posturing and suffers economic re-

verses in the face of an increasingly assertive Germany and Japan, the cold war may seem a period of relative peace and stability. Progressives have both the opportunity and the responsibility to define another direction.

Real Security

Progressives should now force the debate on how best to defend the nation's security. Bush will seek to sustain a $300 billion military budget. He will continue spending $150 billion a year defending prosperous Europeans from an increasingly implausible threat, and more than $60 billion keeping the Pacific and the Middle East safe for (and from) the Japanese. Conservative Democrats vie to be "tough on defense," continuing to equate security with throwing money at the military. Even liberal congressional Democrats find it difficult to challenge the political clout inherent in a $300 billion military budget.

But current priorities increasingly undermine our real security. It is not a question of guns versus butter. Nor of housing the homeless rather than buying more missiles. It is a question of using our scarce resources to meet real security needs such as making our economy competitive, educating and retraining our people, mobilizing a global effort against environmental catastrophe, and waging a real war on drugs. The progressive argument is far more credible on national security than the bipartisan acceptance of outdated commitments and bloated military budgets.

Invest in America

A similar challenge might be posed to economic security. Bush remains wedded to the traditional trickle-down theory of the Republican party: throw money at the rich and the corporations; they will spend it in ways that help the economy. This provides the rationale for Bush's initial economic measures. He vetoed the first increase in the minimum wage in a decade, cut capital gains taxes for the already wealthy, and suggested future cuts in taxes on dividends; all of this after the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans got a 25 percent tax break in the last decade. The country now suffers the greatest income gap on record. Democrats tend to resist more tax breaks, but are frightened of calling for fair taxes on the rich.

The point here is not simply economic injustice, although the Bush program should offend any sense of decency. The point is economic security: What is the best strategy for the country's economic prosperity in the future?

The centrist consensus clings to a myth of free trade, despite growing global (and U.S.) protectionism. It enforces austerity in the Third World, decimating U.S. export markets. It subsidizes corporations less interested in exports than in investment and cheap labor production abroad. It exacerbates financial speculation by giving money to the rich, rather than making long-overdue public investments in infrastructure, education, and the environment.

Here again, a progressive agenda is far more compelling. Invest in America and in American workers, not in multinationals. Invest in producers, not speculators. Demand that the rich and the corporations pay their fair share of taxes so we can make the public investments necessary to make our economy competitive. Defend our markets from the targeted investment and adversarial trade strategies of the Japanese and their imitators, but exercise leadership in expanding the global marketplace—opening closed markets, relieving debt and austerity in the Third World, convincing Germany and Japan to expand domestic demand. Either we will all work together or we will suffer increasingly bitter, destructive disputes.

Personal Security

Progressive economic and national security arguments also provide the basis for a new social agenda. Americans are in fact more generous in spirit and more concerned about others than conventional political wisdom suggests. Hundreds of thousands will gather to protest the condition of homeless people. Millions will vote to defend women's right to choose whether or not to have abortions. Polls show majorities in favor of support programs for women, children, the poor, and the disabled.

A progressive argument that challenges the national security priorities and economic strategy of the Bush administration can address growing concerns about personal security and personal rights as integral to the common good. A campaign for a national health program offers a sensible initial step. National health care is morally compelling, the mark of a civilized society. It is also an economic imperative for corporations, small businesses, and working people.

Similarly, a progressive agenda based on investing in working people can help to transcend divisions of race, religion, and region. Republican strategists realize that a party of white sanctuary has significant political liabilities in an increasingly multicultural and multiracial society. A progressive economic and security argument can finally realize the potential strength of multiracial politics.

The 1990s

The passing of the cold war opens new opportunities for progressives, but forbidding obstacles remain. Money

dominates and limits politics more than ever. Progressive leaders are virtually an endangered species. Citizens will have to set the direction for politicians to follow, but citizen-organizing remains dominated by single-issue politics, divorced from a broader critique. Too many on the Left continue to divorce themselves from any attempt to appeal to a broad majority.

The events of 1989 give many indications that the people may be ready for a new era of progressive movement. The populist revolt against the auto insurance industry that began in California is spreading across the country. Women, labor, and civil rights groups are mobilizing in new force. Corporations and the rich are increasingly held in proper disregard. Bush has only begun to pay the bill from Reagan's party that turned America into the world's largest debtor. If congressional Democrats are cowed and compromised into a conservative consensus, the people may not be. Say goodbye to the eighties. □

SAYING GOODBYE TO THE EIGHTIES

Twilight of the Reaganauts

Carrie Rickey

You know in your gut that decade divisions are unreliable, that the sixties really began in 1963, moments after JFK's assassination, and that the seventies were born in 1974, as Nixon abdicated on network television.

Nevertheless, when you recall movie genres specific to a decade, your heart beats to the rhythms of the thirties musicals and screwball comedies, alternately lightens and darkens at the thought of forties angel fantasies and film noirs, expands to the broad panoramas of fifties biblicals and westerns. You reckon that the Depression created a hunger for the escapist genres of the thirties. That the World War II climate inspired both those movies of seraphic hope and noir doom during the forties. And that America's expanded global role during the fifties (not to mention the new widescreen processes of Cinemascope and Panavision, which demanded epic subject matter to fill them) prompted filmmakers to reexamine historically the ways in which the forces of civilization conquered spiritual and geographical frontiers.

So, you wonder, can you make this kind of easy correlation between eighties American films and eighties American culture? And thus, with the dread that might accompany the preparation for an IRS tax audit of the entire decade, you sift through sheaves of reviews, Oscar reference books, and the inescapable ten-best lists, hoping to see some patterns emerge. And, indeed, several do.

The early eighties saw a flurry of gender-bender pictures such as *Tootsie, Victor/Victoria,* and *Yentl.* In mid-decade, actresses starred in the *Country–Places in the Heart–The River* cycle of heartland movies, which dramatized the plight of the American farmer. By late decade, actors staged a rally of diamonds-are-a-boy's-best-friend movies, in baseball pictures such as *Bull Durham, Major League,* and *Field of Dreams.*

If you are a pop iconographer, you conclude from this extremely limited data that the gender-anxiety movies, which suggested that each of us has feminine and masculine qualities, rapidly gave way later in the decade to reassertions of traditional sexual stereotyping. For what are the heartland movies if not a depiction of women as fertile earth mothers? And what are the baseball pictures if not a presentation of manly men bonding in their favorite phallic ritual?

Such are the limits of pop iconography. Once you argue that one trend has a cultural correlative, another trend cancels it out. The decade, like most decades, contradicted itself.

Case in point: *First Blood,* the initial 1982 installment in the Rambo saga, could be regarded as a liberal picture, since its Vietnam vet's outrage was explained by his exposure to Agent Orange. His homicidal tendencies were "justified," in part, as anger at the government that had exposed him to the herbicide. Just three years later, the reactionary *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* depicted its hero as a flag-waving right-winger who goes back to Vietnam to rescue MIAs and thereby win a war America wouldn't let him win before.

Another case in point: Instead of classifying Barbra

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Streisand's *Yentl* (1983) strictly as a gender-anxiety comedy, you might twin it with Woody Allen's *Zelig* (same year) and see them as exemplars of a minitrend, the Jewish-identity-crisis picture. First you think that they are expressions of Jewish self-criticism, coming out as they did a year after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon—and, as such, the corollary of the Jew-as-sex-symbol trend that attended the Six Day War when ethnic heroes such as Dustin Hoffman and George Segal became Hollywood's unlikeliest heartthrobs. On second and third thought, you view these two movies as antithetical. What is *Yentl* but a Jewish feminist critique of a masculinist culture that traditionally reserved the prerogative of education and mobility for its men? What is *Zelig* but a Jewish masculinist defense of the "chameleon man" who searches for and finally finds his identity only with the help of a shiksa psychoanalyst? One Jew; three opinions.

The eighties were a decade of remystification and fantasy.

So you approach the question of the eighties cinema and culture from the opposite direction. Instead of examining how clusters of movies formed the decade's patterns, you step back to determine the decade's configuration as a whole.

You contrast the films of the eighties with those of the seventies when, it seemed—in the spirit of Watergate—every movie genre got demystified. In the 1970s, thrillers were debunked in *Night Moves,* westerns in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians,* sci-fi in *Dark Star.* The eighties were a decade of remystification and fantasy: thrillers like *Tequila Sunrise,* westerns like *Silverado,* sci-fi like *Aliens.*

Whence this remystification urge? You look at the decade this way. In 1980, in American culture, three signal events occurred:

- A Jasper Johns painting sold at auction for $1 million;
- Ronald Reagan was elected;
- *The Empire Strikes Back,* about the triumph of an authoritarian evil force over altruistic do-gooders, was the year's top-grossing movie.

Compare this to related events in 1989:

- A Jasper Johns painting sold at auction for $17.5 million;
- George Bush was inaugurated;
- *Batman,* about the conflicted triumph of a plutocrat vigilante do-gooder over the forces of anti-establishment evil, was the year's top-grossing movie.

Your knee-jerk response to these factoids is to:

- admit that the figures for the Johns paintings might be an index of cultural inflation;
- acknowledge that, yes, it certainly has been a Republican decade;
- muse whether American partisan politics had any influence over who the good guys and bad guys were in the movies.

Now you feel in your kishkes that there must be an equivalent to the Jasper Johns syndrome in the film world, and swiftly you remember that horrible day in 1981 when you first heard that odious neologism "infotainment." You shudder because you hear that synthesizer reveille of "Entertainment Tonight," the force that popularly redefined film culture in the way that the Johns sales redefined art culture.

With its breathless reporting of the week's top-grossing movies, "Entertainment Tonight" institutionalized the idea that if a film makes a lot of money, then it must be good. On the heels of "E.T." (the infotainment show, not the movie) came its publishing equivalent, *USA Today,* which graphically implied a correlation between box-office success and aesthetic worth. This conflation of market value and actual value has deformed the discourse about moviemaking over the decade. Such marketplace validation prompted eighties movie moguls to speak with more pride about their profits than about their products.

Louis B. Mayer, to name one venal studio mogul of the thirties, knew the difference between the two. Not even he would have dared to conflate profitable trash like the *Andy Hardy* movie series with a quality MGM picture such as *Ninotchka,* which did not make pots of money. Yet during the eighties, minimogul George Lucas indulged in grave discourses on the history of myth and how his study of Joseph Campbell inspired him to create those cardboard icons Luke Skywalker and Indiana Jones. You figured that Lucas was taken seriously because his movies made serious cash.

This triumph of mass-over-class appeal helped eradicate snobby attitudes toward genre movies such as sci-fi and thrillers. That was the good news. The bad news was that making money became both the movie industry's raison d'être and the focus of its products.

In this eighties climate of cold cash, movies about money made money: *Risky Business,* with teenage pimp Tom Cruise as an "entrepreneurial" Andy Hardy; *Secret of My Success,* with its how-to-exceed-in-business tips offered by that genial juvenile, Michael J. Fox; *Wall Street,* with its greed-is-good philosophy expounded by Michael Douglas to an impressionable Charlie Sheen.

These movies, like so many other big moneymakers of the decade, spoke to young, impressionable men. By pitching "product" to a boyish male market (*Gremlins, Goonies, Explorers, License to Drive,* and any movie starring someone named Corey—and you don't mean Wendell), Hollywood created least-common-denominator movies for an audience whose common denominator

was adolescence or would-be adolescence. Learned journals published essays lamenting the new infantilism in Hollywood. You yourself took a yearlong furlough from criticism, deciding that it would have required both a sex change and twenty years lopped off your age to connect with these inanities.

When scholars write the history of America's decline as an economic power and its industrial defeat to Japan, you suspect they will cite *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989). This kinder, gentler teen entertainment about zonked-out California students who would rather play at being rock 'n' roll heroes than do their homework is, in its "hey, dude" inarticulateness, most eloquent testimony to how American movies embodied the eighties zeitgeist. Work wasn't valorized; fame and money were.

Since the Reagan years coincided with the box-office validation of a film and infotainment's revaluation of culture, it is tempting to see Reaganomics as the causal factor behind them. Unfortunately, you can't blame everything on the Republicans. Though "Entertainment Tonight" enjoyed its broadcast debut during Reagan's first hundred days, the show was conceived in the death throes of the Carter administration.

But the nation's films did not escape the influence of partisan politics altogether. The eighties and its trickle-down economic practices also produced trickle-down morals. One movie genre spanning the decade is that of American Lives, which, during the eighties, ranged from *Coal Miner's Daughter* with Loretta Lynn to *La Bamba* with singer Ritchie Valens; from *Raging Bull* with Jake La Motta to *Great Balls of Fire* with Jerry Lee Lewis. In films such as these, a Horatio Alger sense of how the humble can succeed in America by dint of native talent and hard work was overlaid on a narrative that didn't shrink from acknowledging that, yes, bad things happen to famous people. Wife-beating. Plane crashes. Pedophilia. These films spoke to the realists who didn't believe the fantasists who concocted the Reagan revolution.

Other American lives depicted onscreen seemed to be an expression of the political climate. Early in the decade, on the heels of the Carter years, you saw films about social activists on the Left. There was socialist journalist John Reed in *Reds* (1981), the nonviolent heroics of *Gandhi* (1982), and the story of anti-nuclear advocate Karen Silkwood in *Silkwood* (1983).

Once the Reagan revolution set in, fantasy heroes replaced actual ones, and we began paying to see the likes of the Uzi-toting Rambo or the bullwhip-cracking Indiana Jones. Under Reagan, even the American Lives represented onscreen were mythologized: gangbuster Eliot Ness, in real life a confirmed bachelor, became an upright family man in *The Untouch-*

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Jim Tynan

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ables, all the better to express his moral machismo; disc jockey Adrian Cronauer was retailored into a standup comedian in *Good Morning, Vietnam.*

Subversive among these American Lives under Reagan was that elegy to American enterprise, *Tucker,* a mythologized biography of the automotive designer whose entrepreneurial spirit and artistic vision were crushed by American monopoly capital.

The best that can be said about the Reagan influence on film was that the president who called for a return to the Ozzie-and-Harriet family values of the fifties also inspired American Gothics such as *Blue Velvet, Peggy Sue Got Married,* and *Heathers*—all of which explored the rotting infrastructure of American dream houses and their inhabitants.

And the worst that can be said about the Reagan influence on film is that at the beginning of his administration, at least the forces of right and wrong (not to mention Right and Left) were clearly presented in movies such as *The Empire Strikes Back.* Released at the end of the Reagan years, *Batman* muddles the distinctions. The good guy, as befits a Reaganaut hero, is a plutocrat and a vigilante. The bad guy, as also befits a Reaganaut hero, wears a false smile and makes his money by product tampering.

Having suffered this moral twilight of the Reagan era, skeptically you await the millennium countdown of the nineties. Will there be a morning after?

If the promise of the eighties independent-feature movement continues to be fulfilled in the next decade, then yes. For there were movies that resisted the Reagan juggernaut, movies that dealt with lived lives in the eighties: independent features such as John Sayles's *The Return of the Secaucus Seven,* Lizzie Borden's *Working Girls,* Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It,* Michael Toshiyuki Uno's *The Wash.* Variously set in a New Hampshire commune, a Manhattan massage parlor, a Brooklyn loft, and San Jose's Japantown, these films set out to explore communities rather than to mythologize individuals; they question, rather than exalt, the status quo; they present social conflicts rather than resolve them; and they provide payoffs that are emotional, not monetary.

Though it was completed in 1989, you'd like to nominate erstwhile journalist Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* as the first film of the nineties. This film essay chronicles its maker's attempt to get Roger Smith, the president of General Motors, to visit Flint, Michigan in order to see how the closing of GM's plants has transformed the once industrious city into a ghost town where the rat population now outnumbers the human, and where the only person whose job is assured is the sheriff, who evicts as many as twenty-four people a day. Because of Moore's tenacity and humor, he makes you understand that when a company like GM devotes itself to shareholder profits and ignores both the product it makes and the workers who make it, the corporation loses touch with its natural community and constituency; it becomes a soulless cash cow.

Though Moore's gentle film is a critique of corporate economics, it also stands as an indictment of Hollywood in the eighties, when making money meant validation and making movies seemed incidental. □

Saying Goodbye to the Eighties

Remember Central America?

Saul Landau

George Bush may never tire of taking bows for the victory of capitalism over communism (capitalism, of course, is translated to the public as freedom and democracy; communism is a yet unborn system of social order translated to the public as the governing system of our archenemy, the Soviet Union). The heady triumphalism in the White House, however, might have obscured the significance of an August 8, 1989, *New York Times* headline: "Five Latin Nations Defy U.S." The banner referred to Central America's unanimous rejection of the contras.

One could search the front pages of the *Times* going back to its inception and not find anything similar to the day on which even some of Washington's most loyal clients announced they would no longer abide the CIA-created contras. But unlike the moves away from Soviet

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control in Hungary and Poland, the events below the Rio Grande do not signal to the policy planners the end of the old order here. Nor do the Potomac policy mavens give credence to a new, emerging order, whose essence is geoeconomic and environmental.

As 1990 approaches, U.S. policy thinking remains stuck in the epistemological mire of permanent cold war. Central America offers an illustration of how real changes in world affairs bear little relation to thinking in Washington. President Reagan and his ideologues internationalized Central America in the 1980s because they chose to make it, in Jeanne Kirkpatrick's words, "the most important place in the world." For a century the U.S. backyard—the victim of gunboat and dollar diplomacy, the Good Neighbor policy, and decades of informal CIA and then contra hanky-panky—the region is now home to Italian geothermal energy experts, Scandinavian and German alternative fuel experimenters, and Japanese engineers studying the feasibility of an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua. By the mid-1980s, European support for Contadora, a Central American peace plan, effectively punctured the century-old dogma of leaving the Western hemisphere to the United States.

The motive for both the initiatives and the support they generated in Europe was fear that the United States would once again land combat troops on Latin American soil and destabilize the entire lower continent. Provoked by Reagan's bellicose language, traditionally docile allies in the region and from NATO not only criticized CIA shenanigans but continued to send aid to the Sandinista government. Ironically, President Reagan, the toughest talker of them all, did not even consider dispatching combat troops to the area. (Lyndon Johnson, on the other hand, didn't hesitate to send troops to the Dominican Republic in 1965 to end Dominican hopes for independence.)

In 1984, Thomas Enders, then assistant secretary for inter-American affairs, supposedly approached President Reagan and put to him the U.S. dilemma. "The contras can't win," Enders allegedly informed the President. "Therefore we can either negotiate a tough agreement with the Sandinistas or send in U.S. troops."

"Now Tom," Reagan scolded, "I don't want you to get me into trouble. I don't want to hear that word [troops] again. You'll figure out some way of dealing with it without negotiating or thinking about that no-no word." The "banana diplomacy" that ensued from Washington cost the U.S. government dearly in international credibility, but more importantly, it underlined the fact that a new era was at hand.

Thanks to an active anti-interventionist movement inside the U.S. (and internationally), Reagan was unable to garner support for his aggressive policies either in Congress or in public opinion polls. Because the President no longer had the easy option of sending in troops, his right-wing ideologues searched for a different way to finesse revolutions.

Although Reagan insisted that the Soviets were behind the Central American guerrilla movements, he could not coerce Congress into granting funds unconditionally to support the contras or the succession of right-wing militarists that dominated El Salvador and Guatemala. Thus a vocabulary of human rights and democracy was grafted onto the Reagan rhetoric in the hope that this would assure funding for intervention in the area. Meanwhile, as the ideologues were trumpeting the dangers of the guerrillas to U.S. national security, the Monroe Doctrine was being implicitly challenged on a daily basis.

The once-prodigious might of the United Fruit Company and the CIA had eroded, and U.S. hegemony was being gradually reduced by creeping investment from Europe and Japan, regular summit meetings between Central American heads of state, and the dramatic, albeit low-profile, appearance of eighty-four Japanese Peace Corps members in Honduras alone. The language of our foreign policy makers does not yet reflect the dramatic shifts that have taken place.

Another factor that must influence revolutionary and imperial thinking is the announcement by President Gorbachev that the Soviets will not underwrite future socialist experiments in the Third World. They cannot afford it and have come to question the very model that they once offered as an ideal for developing countries. Cuba's economy appears stalled, her politics now scandal-ridden.

U.S. economic and strategic power in the region will be forced to adjust to these rapid regional and global changes. But so too will revolutionary thinking and practice begin to adapt to the world of the 1990s. To the revolutionaries, the matter is one of life and death. For the nostalgic defense intellectuals in Washington, who dream of the good old days when Brezhnev offered them an ideal enemy, the issue is where and when to invest their intellectual pension funds.

There remain old-style revolutionaries who cling to the vision of a Che Guevara–type guerrilla movement eventually achieving state control. But the important actors have moved away from the romantic dogma of the 1960s and into the bloody reality of their present.

The offspring of the Cuban revolution, such as the Salvadoran FMLN (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation), have made major changes. In early 1981, they prepared for their "final offensive"; in 1989, after almost a decade of heroic but devastating war, they are attempting to negotiate an end to the strife with the right-wing government of El Salvador, whose leaders

swore they would die before talking with the hated Communists. The FMLN even offers the possibility of disarming to induce concessions on the government side.

The Sandinistas—purportedly stooges of hard-line Fidel Castro—have invited foreign capital to enter Nicaragua under optimal conditions, introduced an International Monetary Fund–type austerity program, and plan to hold elections under conditions freer than those in Poland and Hungary. The United States remains blinded by the Sandinistas' initial defiance in taking revolutionary power; it is alone among governments in its unbridled hostility toward the Ortega government. Washington chose Violeta Chamorro, because she has "name recognition," as its hand-picked candidate to oppose the Sandinistas in the February 1990 election. The debate in Congress and the media is over whether or not she should receive aid from the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy, or some other agency; no one in the media or government has asked what Mrs. Chamorro stands for, or what her plans are for Nicaragua's future. The knee-jerk support she receives in elite circles derives not from any strategy, but from the same hegemonic impulse that has guided American policy in the past.

The U.S. willingness and ability to intervene militarily in the Third World to prevent radical revolution has been seriously compromised.

The presumption no longer reigns in Central America, Europe, or Japan that the United States alone makes final decisions on the future of its traditional sphere of influence. Nicaragua's destiny will not be dictated by the United States or its contra-creation. The role of other countries in Central America is far from overwhelming, but it has been sufficient to allow for a change of agenda in the region.

Since 1982, democracy has been construed in Washington and in the mass media as signifying a vapid form of electionism, replete with media fanfare to convince a skeptical public. In Central America, however, the word is acquiring different meaning. Among wide circles of the religious and political community, reaching well into the middle of the spectrum, democracy must mean participation, equity, and safe environment. It also assumes peace and debt adjustment as a prerequisite for serious development. Religious and political leaders today laugh at mentions of Soviet threats, but take seriously the possibility of the Lebanonization of Central America. Should the United States proceed with its impulse toward militarization—its forward-basing and use of the territory as an inexpensive training area—the prospect for protracted war looms large.

Central American presidents—right, center, and left—have implicitly rejected this American-based path. Even members of the military command have begun to question the new marriage to the Pentagon, one which requires the Congressional blessing of an aid check each year. Congress is promising an aid check to the Cristiani government this year because members of Congress lack the courage to ask the question: What conceivable interest does the United States have in perpetuating the ruinous war in El Salvador?

But new forces have entered the debate on Central America. The environmental movement has discovered that El Salvador, like much of Central America, is an eco-disaster area, and it is demanding an immediate end to the fighting as the first step toward restoring water, soil, and air to conditions suitable for civilized existence.

The Bush administration effectively ignores the environment, as it also ignores the debt, the increasing poverty, the immigration into the United States (Central American labor is now exploited more by U.S. business inside, not outside, U.S. borders) and a myriad of other issues, including the drug trade. The administration continues to talk in an archaic national security language. It is running an inept covert war against General Noriega in Panama, and it refuses formally to give up on its support for the contras and the war in El Salvador. These policies result not from a grand strategy, but precisely from the absence of any coherent plan to use U.S. power in a way that would be coincident with national interest. The cold war policy makers in Washington simply cling to old language and behavior patterns, while even their own clients recognize the new reality.

In a meeting of Central American heads of state held in Esquipulas in 1987, President Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador reportedly blew up at Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega. In the midst of his peroration, Duarte was chastised by another Central American president, who pointed to the assembled heads of state seated around the table and said: "Take it easy, Napoleon, if it were not for Danielito (Ortega), none of us would be here because none of us would be presidents."

The truth of the statement brought the meeting to silence and then laughter. The recognition of the two factors that had determined Central American destiny were never clearer: Central American majorities have for centuries attempted to assert their needs through political movement, only to be thwarted by their own oligarchies and militaries and the United States.

While the Central American Left has been forced by events to change its thinking, the solidarity and progressive movements around the world are slower in attuning their political visions to the new realities. Their vision of a just society remains utopian in the age of Japanese and German bankers transferring millions of yen and marks in milliseconds to determine the economic futures of Third World nations.

The Guatemalan oligarchy and military seem equally locked into thought and behavior patterns that do not coincide with the world of the 1990s. Unmoved by events and unequivocally brutal and arcane in their outlook, they seek only to destroy all opposition through any means at their disposal. This warped creation of the 1954 CIA coup and four decades of U.S. military encouragement have placed a "democrat" in its presidential seat. Vionicio Cerezo, hailed as an independent force, has proven himself to be no more than a rubber stamp for the right wing on internal matters relating to genuine opposition.

So, as Central America enters the 1990s, it has mixed prospects. Peace has never had more of a chance than now in Nicaragua; there is room for optimism in El Salvador. But the near future appears bleak for Guatemala. U.S. activists have an opportunity to step into a policy vacuum in Washington and join with liberation theologists and activists in Central America to force a U.S. policy that makes sensible use of U.S. power. If the alternative is not presented and fought for, the idiotic but compelling presumption of American hegemony will continue to prevail.

The guiding pillars of post-World War II strategy no longer stand. The anti-Communist premise, in which the containment of the Soviet Union became the overriding strategic goal, is about as marketable to most of the world public today as a new soft-coal-burning asbestos factory would be. The famous Bretton Woods agreement in which the dollar would forever rule has faded into ancient history. The U.S.-dominated alliances that embraced much of the world in the postwar years have now either died or atrophied; at best, their members are desperately seeking a rationale for why they should be maintained. Finally, the U.S. willingness and ability to intervene militarily anywhere in the Third World to prevent radical revolution has been seriously compromised by bitter experiences from the Korean War in the 1950s through Vietnam in the 1960s to the Iran-contra scandals of the late 1980s.

Clinging to the cold war grand strategy has thrown the U.S. government out of synch—with the dynamics of its own economy, with the political trajectory of Europe and Asia, and even with the less central affairs of Central America. Ironically, it may well be that Bush will recognize the new geopolitical and geoenvironmental relations precisely because of his administration's inability to arrange even the most apparently routine affairs in "our" own backyard. □

Saying Goodbye to the Eighties

A Decade of Unlearning

Amy E. Schwartz

The 1984 Arnold Schwarzenegger movie *The Terminator,* a fun flick about a good human and an evil robot sent through a time machine to battle each other for control of the future, had a real razzle-dazzle love scene toward the end. Or, no, let's be straightforward about it—a terrific sex scene. The sex in this scene was crucial to the plot, which involved the fate of a future war hero: Would he be born as planned or eliminated from history by the opposition? But that wasn't really why the scene was there. It was there because just about every action-adventure movie in the last fifteen years has had a pretty good sex scene worked in somewhere, a pattern that can be casually confirmed by random rentals at any video store.

Those days are gone. In the comparably hyped action-adventure film of the summer of '89, *Batman,* there's plenty of sex vibration: Kim Basinger wears flowing white; she gasps; she flings herself around like the bride of Dracula. But the, er, action she sees is discreetly clipped short. And later, in the middle of an argument, Basinger exclaims to Michael Keaton, "And I even *slept* with you, I can't *believe* I did *that*!" If we need to tag the culture of the eighties and its legacy,

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these last two or three years may offer the easiest pinpoint: more or less explicit sex, which seemed so firmly established in mainstream movies, is being carefully and firmly eased back out.

This strictly unscientific reading of film culture—no figures, no surveys, just an impression—for me casts the larger shadow of cultural backlash. Will the nineties be a fundamentalist decade? Will we snap all the way back to the fifties, or will the slide be halted halfway? These are sharp concerns for those of us whose adult years, the bulk of them, will be lived under that future's still unforeseen rules; and the concern is sharper yet for women, who feel the effect of such rules first.

Appeals to new "community standards," "family values," or "restraint," often noble and earnestly progressive in motivation, take many forms in practice—of which one, possibly the subtlest, is the creep toward demureness in the popular culture. The appearance of new social mores in movies lends a new urgency to the need to distinguish among these returns to "conservative" behavior of one kind or another, to differentiate the healthy and enlightening from the cowardly and repressive. Sorting by motive is a relatively easy parlor game: teen pregnancy prevention is good, Jesse Helms is bad; yanking books from high school libraries is bad, reembracing your faith is good. Sorting by practical fallout is more problematic. One of the contradictions present in any cultural slide to the right, including the present one, is the way people respond to new, sincere, frequently very real anxieties and preoccupations—the strains resulting from liberation, the graying of a hedonistic generation, the fears of a new drug or a new sexual disease—with solutions whose practical effect may be to bring back the worst of the old.

In an individual life it's possible to face these practical contradictions with great subtlety, integrating new restraints and old ideals with the fresher truths of a more open and tolerant world. (Jewish feminists provide the obvious example.) But the cumulative effects in the culture of many such individual decisions are tougher to control. It's easy for restrictions to mount up, to get out of hand.

To have left home for college just as the eighties began—to remember Reagan's first victory as a freshman-year autumn debauch, and to have passed most of one's twenties watching that victory play itself out in the culture—is to belong to a generation whose parameters can be drawn as precisely as the boomers'. We are the generation that grew up liberated already; we had no need to rebel. When we hit puberty, sex was OK; when we got old enough to imagine college, girls were already established inside the old Ivy League barricades, with coed dorms and freedom of behavior taken for granted. Girls were as likely as boys to talk about bright futures; more important, primed on the Judy Blume books, they were just as entitled to feel lustful. Abortion was legal, contraception was available, drugs were undeniably around. The adults, if you believed the magazines, were busy with the Me Decade, a-prattle about Plato's Retreat and other sex playgrounds. It sounds like ancient history, and parts of it deserve to be. But about other parts, the parts that involved genuine consciousness and personal liberation, it seems fair to worry a little: Did that more open generation have an end as well as a beginning? Are the high schoolers of the age of AIDS and Reagan, the real eighties babies, going to grow up to shape quite a different world?

My picture of the seventies is, of course, a caricature. But living in a decade as a teenager, a caricature is what you tend to get; and eighties babies will do the same to what they are hearing now. Of course I know now that the public policy reconsiderations of today had seventies roots; and on other matters, such as TV integration, the seventies were miles behind where we are now. But in theory, at least, we had arrived: toleration, equality, desegregated schools, open futures. To take a small but reliable sample, school dress codes had mostly disappeared, leaving the student population in unisex blue jeans; lately there's been a marked interest in bringing dress codes back. This is a good example of the kind of conservative shift that, despite the reasonable and perfectly egalitarian principles involved, plays out in practice as a step closer to fifties roles and fifties norms. So far, in practice, school uniform resurgence means that despite universal paeans to the importance of exercise and an active lifestyle, a lot of little girls are back in the modesty-inducing walk-don't-run confines of skirts.

Cultural scraps like this are just tea leaves, iffy for forecasting. But the worry is there: Is the popular culture pointing the way to a backlash? And if so, how far will it reach, how much can we unlearn? The most common answer to this seems to be "Oh, not much." There are too many women in the work force ever to be displaced, people argue; and as for tolerance of race and religion, we have that—we just disagree a little over how to achieve equality. I beg skepticism, but it's a large question: In the long run, does tolerance stick? Is it possible to forget once you've learned, to close up the opened mind? We're due to find out pretty soon. The eighties have laid the groundwork for unlearning.

Unlearning is a charged term: it judges. Not all the turns to conservatism have to translate this way, into losses and imposed restrictions. Is it learning or unlearning when people in growing numbers turn back to religion, when babies and cocooning and the right brand of stroller are hip? You could take the long view:

People who have reached complete freedom, or think they have, turn naturally toward limits. Then they keep going in the direction they've started, unless something happens to brake their glide—a "something" unlikely to be supplied in the Bush years. You could even say that the alternation of open and closed culture is no more morally charged than the endless oscillation of poetic fashion between free verse and rhyme. Except for one morally inescapable matter: an era of restrictions on sex has an inexorable tendency to translate into restrictions on women. A landscape of conservative sexual mores, in which men seek sex and women control the access to it, powerfully generates the conviction that, in other desires and ambitions as well, men and women are fundamentally different.

One thing is certain. The shape of future backlash will depend not on present practice but on the messages sent to the ears of kids. The late eighties enlightenment of multiracial TV and declarations of equal opportunity "consensus" offers little guidance; it has been produced by people who got their most concentrated cultural messages during the sixties and seventies. What these eighties kids make, based on what they have been given (true eighties kids, picking up less of politics or news than of movies and music), is what will play out in the nineties and the oughties. And it is a difficult text to read.

On one level, the youth culture is hectically, riotously open: Madonna wears less, lyrics and MTV images are notoriously explicit, Prince puts sex right on the surface. On the other hand, AIDS encroaches, colleges go dry, and gospel rock sells big. The newsmagazine adults aren't nattering about Plato's Retreat anymore, but tearing their hair over whether to censor Martin Scorsese's film about Christianity, or defend Salman Rushdie's novel about Islam, or gut the National Endowment for the Arts; and in my city, at least, they are a lot more likely to mention their church or synagogue affiliation than their shrink. If their controversies intrude on kids directly, it's likely to be in the long-running school board debates over how to teach sex education and whether to equip schools with birth control clinics, or, in some cases, day care centers. That sounds like the acme of liberal tolerance. But in the meantime, at Boston University, President John Silber is busy instituting a no-overnight-visitor rule, a reinvented parietal.

Unlearning. When Elayne Bennett, wife of then Secretary of Education William Bennett, got a group of public school students together in Washington to pursue chastity, she chose all girls. The group was called "Best Friends," and the young women in the program—aged eleven to thirteen—received a pink rose on graduation. The theme was Just Say No: live for the future, think about who you are, and no sex until after high school. The organizers had tried including boys, but coed sessions were awkward and they dropped them. It would be crazy to argue broadly against the value of such a program; obviously, girls under thirteen shouldn't be having sex. But why the pink roses, why the equating of virginity with worth and self-esteem? The program was touted as an "alternative" to birth control and sex education, and this, in a sense, is exactly what it was.

An era of restrictions on sex has an inexorable tendency to translate into restrictions on women.

Admittedly, it's a long stretch from "Best Friends" to the unlearning of the once new, once bright promise of sexually free and responsible women. In a different sphere, it's a long stretch from studies that sneer at the emphasis on minority history in elementary school textbooks—an NYU professor named Paul Vitz provided the classic turn on this theme in a 1986 article in *The Public Interest*—to the wider unlearning of tolerance that's evident on college campuses. And in popular culture, it's a long stretch from an earnestly wholesome group like Tipper Gore's Parents' Music Resource Center—a group of political spouses in Washington who publicize the racist, exploitative, and explicit lyrics of groups like Guns 'n' Roses, hoping this will cut sales—and the Rev. Donald Wildmon, the preacher who uses invective, economic boycotts, and occasional anti-Semitism to target supposed outrages as disparate as *The Last Temptation of Christ* and Roseanne Barr. These are differences of philosophy and mind-set. They share only direction. But direction makes them overlap and reinforce one another.

Which kind will prevail? Can we do this and halt halfway? The challenge is all in the sorting. One way is to apply the egalitarian critique: Is this a way of making women different, less free? Another is the old moral standby of fist and nose: Is this a way of casting a new strong searchlight on one's own behavior, or of sweeping the streets with it, forcing others to change? All such distinctions are hard to draw, hard to insist upon, hard to stick to in the face of pressure or political momentum. It will take effort and care to select those elements of the old that enrich new tolerances, rather than those that conflict with them. I'm not optimistic that the society will manage to do that. But only by asking questions like these can we begin, perhaps, to strike the right balance between unlearning and relearning. □

Current Debate: Jews and Christmas

The Christmas season is a difficult time for many Jews, particularly those of us who place a high value on good relations with non-Jews. Our non-Jewish friends often assume that we are celebrating the holiday and sharing in their joy. Should we raise the issue and insist on our own space? Or should we participate in their holiday with them, assume that Christmas is "merely a secular holiday," and then simply keep quiet about what makes us feel uncomfortable? Or should we try to build up Chanukah as an alternative celebration? What do we tell our children, who are likely to be mesmerized by the barrage of holiday dazzle on television, in schools, and in the stores? And what about our perception that Christmas is really a religious holiday, and that many non-Jewish Americans may be missing out on the most nourishing aspect of their own holiday as they empty it of religious content?

These and other questions trouble Jews each Christmas season. The following two perspectives are not really opposed. They tell of how two very sensitive and committed Jews have been grappling with some of these issues. We will raise the issues again next year, so let us know how you've been handling the holiday tensions.

Taking Down the Christmas Tree

Anne Roiphe

In December of 1978, the *New York Times* asked me to write a small piece on a Christmas theme for the home section of the paper. I dashed off an essay on being Jewish and having a Christmas tree. The *Times* published it the Thursday before the holiday. I had thought this a small, unimportant piece, a kind of family musing that would melt in the mind of the reader like a snowflake on the tongue. I have made misjudgments in my life but none so consequential for me as this one.

The phones rang at the *New York Times*—it seemed as if all the officers of all the major Jewish organizations were complaining to their personal friends at the *Times* about my piece. Housewives, rabbis, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, all but Indian chiefs phoned or wrote in, furious that the paper had published an article that advocated assimilation, displayed ignorance of Judaism, and seemed to express contempt for the Jewish way of life. At our house the phone calls began on Thursday at noon and lasted for weeks. "I hope your children get leukemia," no fewer than three irate callers announced. "You deserve to die," several heavy-breathing souls saw fit to whisper through the AT&T lines. Far more difficult for me was the caller who announced himself as a survivor and said I had dishonored the dead of Auschwitz and Treblinka. Other survivors wrote with the same comments.

What I wrote in the *New York Times* was this: every Christmas, my family bought a Christmas tree—and it seemed as if every Christmas we ran into the rabbi who lived across the street just as we were bringing the tree into our house. I always felt uncomfortable, embarrassed, and I didn't quite understand why. True, my family was Jewish, and all of us identified as such. But we had made a decision not to celebrate Chanukah—because we were secular Jews, because Chanukah had always seemed to me to be a holiday about an unacceptable miracle. God, I said, should have prevented the war in the first place, saved the lives of those who died in battle on both sides, instead of merely allowing a small can of oil an extended life. After the Holocaust, the miracle of the can of oil seemed pretty weak. At this point in my article, I made an embarrassing mistake. I confused the Romans with the Syrians and revealed to the readers of the *New York Times* that I had learned about Chanukah so many years before and had become so indifferent that even my grasp of Jewish history had grown weak. I aptly, if unconsciously, demonstrated the point that ignorance about Judaism is the ice on the slippery slope to total assimilation. In my essay, I concluded by stating that we celebrated Christmas because it was a way to come together as a family, to pause in our daily efforts, to be with each other, and to give something to each other. In honor of what? In honor of the family, I supposed.

The intense response to the piece made me realize that I had inadvertently offended many people. Rabbis were using the piece as the subject of their sermons, treating me as if I were a female Arafat. Every day, rabbis, scholars, and friends invited me to explore Judaism and see what it was that I had missed.

I accepted those invitations. Why? I realized that I had written the piece out of discomfort with the peculiar form my Jewishness had taken. I had written the article with the knowledge that Christmas without Christ (because that is all we had) was only a com-

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mercial break, a huge effort to make the family happy through purchases, large and small, which never seemed to fulfill whatever it was that everyone needed. I knew that Christmas stripped of its religious meaning was a charm on the American bracelet, a potion for homogenization that left one thirsty for identity and meaning and self.

So I began to study Talmud. I read Jewish history, I read about the Jewish mystics, and I talked to every rabbi who would speak with me. I learned about the richness of the Jewish tradition, the arguments between Shammai and Hillel, the centuries of worrying about kindness and the law. After several years, I began to know the Jewish story, which was my story after all, finally my real story. I realized that, although I indeed knew the words to "Good King Wenceslas," I now knew the Kaddish and the meaning of the shofar and the names of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Nachman. I also knew that I was now tied, by a love beyond understanding, to the fate of the Jewish people. I began to understand the meanings behind the rituals, and I found that I was amazed and proud of what it meant to be Jewish, of the ways Jews have approached intellectual issues, of the ways we have survived, of the ways our rituals blend into the seasons and bind us together in a past that finds its purpose in the future.

I had not understood the force of the dominant culture playing against my fragile identity, telling me that I would be more beautiful if I looked like a non-Jew.

My studies made me realize that I had not freely chosen to be less Jewish and more American. I hadn't known that assimilation was something that was happening to me and my family. I hadn't known that a tide of history had borne my family from Central Europe to the shores of the Lower East Side and up to the portals of the best colleges in the land. I had not understood the force of the dominant culture playing against my fragile identity, telling me that I would be more beautiful if I looked like a non-Jew, with straight blond hair and a short nose. I hadn't understood that, growing up in the forties, I had absorbed the anti-Semitism of the culture, and that's why I thought that people who spoke with accents were peculiar, that Jews were outsiders. I wanted to be inside with the others. And where were the others at Christmas? They were gathered around their Christmas tree.

Before I began to learn about Judaism, I didn't realize that assimilation had a dark side. I thought assimilation was a process as natural and inevitable as breathing. That's not quite true. I didn't think about it at all. I now realize that assimilation can produce an identity that is shallow, materialistic, unrooted, and anxious. Assimilation can deprive a person of the pleasure of belonging and the vitality that comes from real knowledge about and interest in that person's own community. To be American and nothing else is to be bland like a McDonald's hamburger, to be flat like the highways that cross Kansas, to be dull like our nightly TV programs. Americans can spout platitudes about the Constitution and brotherly love and the wonder of Paul Revere riding through the night, but the American identity, if it is not grafted onto something firm, turns to vapor, a substance that cannot sustain or nourish.

My studies of Judaism made me understand the conflicts my parents and I had faced. I realized that the concepts of Diaspora and melting pot are directly opposed and that my parents had chosen the melting pot for reasons that were legitimate enough for them.

When I was growing up, Christmas was the only holiday of the solstice that was important. My mother found it hard to resist the twinkling lights, the fir trees, the reindeer, and the presents that were all around her. At that time, no one celebrated Chanukah in a way that could compete with the apparent joyousness of Christmas. This was no small matter, because the power of Christmas—the carols, the Mass, and the commercial hoopla—was very great and made the American mainstream Christian world seem more appealing than the Jewish one. The choices individuals and families make about Christmas are significant statements about assimilation, about how

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these individuals and families will live as Jews in America and where they will stand on the tightrope between being Jewish and being American. When Jews resist Christmas, we affirm our own separate identity. When Jews resist Christmas, we reduce the hypocrisy in our lives and increase our personal security by deepening our roots within our own traditions. We claim our right to participate as equals and not just as a barely tolerated minority when we insist on *not* going along with the dominant culture.

The Jewish world has recognized the importance of upgrading Chanukah to compete with Christmas. Jewish children, like their Christian neighbors, can now feel that they have their own holiday exploding with joy. This upgrading of Chanukah, although purists find it somewhat silly, is an important tool in fighting off the appeal of the mass culture, of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer and Tiny Tim and the Little Drummer Boy. There is no question, however, that Christmas with all the angels singing is a powerful matter. When, as a result of my travels, both intellectual and literal, through the Jewish landscape, my family began to celebrate Chanukah instead of Christmas, my children thought I was the Grinch who stole the holiday.

I am certain, however, that the somewhat delirious buying of objects that had occupied me from Thanksgiving to December 25 was not the way to make a family strong and root its members in their communal past and communal future. The Jewish content of my life was rescued by my writing that small piece ten years ago, and for that I am grateful.

I am not so grateful, however, for what I learned through the harshness of Jewish response to the piece. The hostile response was an example of the depth of fear in the Jewish community of the seductiveness of the Christian world, a fear that perhaps is not helpful and is an example of the tendency rooted deep in Jewish culture to declare the other person outside the pale. As long as there is a Diaspora, there will be many Jewish families who continue to celebrate Christmas—because of childhood memories, because of the intermarriage of some member, because of living in an isolated community—without losing all connection to their Jewish roots or their Jewish life. The Christmas tree should not be used as a club with which one Jew assaults another. In each generation, we will lose some Jews to the mainstream culture, and in each generation we will gain others who are returning to the community with renewed passion and connection. We can think of Jewish families as riding on swells of an American ocean—some drowning, some floating, some steering the boat. Which role an individual plays will vary within each family, but no one can necessarily predict who is going under and who is about to be captain of the ship.

The staying power of Judaism is and will remain its ability to provide us with an access to spiritual, political, and moral vision and language that speak to us more powerfully than any of the competing visions that populate the contemporary world. Strengthening and teaching that vision is the only way to avoid assimilation. Whatever we do to keep the Jewish community strong—and there are many things we can do—we should not make harsh judgments against those who move back and forth between Frosty the Snowman and Esther the Queen. We should not allow our fear of erosion to promote hostility toward anyone, not someone carrying a red and green package all wrapped up in a silver bow, not someone with a package of tinsel in a shopping bag; not anyone at all.

I now see Chanukah not as a celebration of the miracle of the oil. (I still think that God must make a grander miracle to earn our amazement.) I see Chanukah as a time when, as we light the candles, we pause in awe before the Jewish people whose survival through adversity brings light into the darkness of the human soul. This view makes me Jewish in a different way from the way in which I was Jewish before. It makes me a part of the continuity while allowing me still to be myself, a modern American Jew filled with all the doubts and dark thoughts that are common to my times. Christmas is not the innocent matter that I had once thought. □

Dancing With the Dark

Arthur Waskow

Turning away from Christmas is one thing; turning toward Chanukah is another. Anne Roiphe has written mostly about the former; as her essay ends, she is sketching out what it might mean to undertake the latter. The turning "toward" rather than "away from" is the pathway I'd like to explore.

Why so? If I think of it theoretically, it comes out like this: so long as we focus on Christmas, the issue is one of staying Jewish. When we begin to focus on Chanukah, the issue is how to *become* Jewish.

And if I describe it in terms of my own experience, it comes out this way: my own dance with the dark time of year has been more about the enrichment of Chanukah than about the rejection of Christmas. Not that "the Christmas problem" was in any way outside my experience. When I was growing up, I too had to figure out Jewish strategies for deciding whether to sing (or not to sing) Christmas carols in a public school music class where 90 percent of the kids were Jewish. (Stop at "Christ the King"? Hum along?) I too enjoyed the candy canes that our school's rail-thin janitor, dressed up

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with a pillow in his shirt to look like Santa Claus, handed out in every classroom. I too oohed and ahhed with my mother when she took me to see the grand and joyful Christmas windows in the great downtown Baltimore department stores—Hutzler's and Hochschild's and the others owned by the great German-Jewish retail barons.

Yet it is with even greater vividness that I remember the Chanukah when, in the synagogue Sunday-school show, I played Hannah's seventh son. This son was the seventh to refuse to bow down to Antiochus's idol, the seventh to be tortured to death while his mother Hannah cried and smiled. Smiled? Of course! She was triumphant because her children were such courageous Jews, resisting tyranny and the idolatry that is always part of tyranny.

My own mother was named Hannah, too. She too thought it was brave, and Jewish, to resist tyranny. She told me that it was all right to visit a church and even to pray there—but not to kneel, because Jews never bow down, not to kings and tyrants, not even to God.

Was that Sunday-school play the inspiration for my lifelong progressive politics? (After all, I wanted my own Hannah-mother to smile at me for not bowing down—and she did, she did.) Was it, in some half-buried way, the reason why, in midadulthood, I reconnected those progressive politics with being Jewish? Was it, is it, the reason why, as a grown-up, I have continued to explore Chanukah, wanting to understand and celebrate it in more grown-up ways?

The seed of light may have been sown at the Shaarei Zion Synagogue in Baltimore. But it certainly lived underground, hidden in darkness, while I was growing up. It was not until I was a grown-up that I learned that the rhythms of Jewish time are rich and beautiful. And that was when I began to take new grown-up pleasure in the darks and lights of Chanukah—its paradoxes.

This holy-day is one of darkness and light. Its history can be understood as one long extended joke on the interweaving of "assimilation" and Judaization, of the universally human and the particularly Jewish, of astronomy and politics.

To begin with, look at when Chanukah comes and what we do. It comes at the darkest moment of the year. This moment is close to the winter solstice, when the sun is farthest away, and is poised on the 25th of Kislev, the waning of the Jewish month, when the moon has almost disappeared. And does disappear, during the festival's eight days. And returns, in the last two days. No moment in the year is darker. Even if Chanukah were to take place precisely on the solstice, the moment would not be darker, because in certain years that moment would be one of a bright night moon.

The darkest moment of the year. Biologists report that many human beings respond to midwinter darkness with depression and apathy, which can be cured with doses of light.

And what do we do? We light more and more candles each dark night.

So far, this seems to have nothing to do with being Jewish. Sun, moon, light, dark, human. Am I being an "assimilationist" if I think this way?

Maybe. But this is the way Jews think. What does it mean to live as a Jew? It means to take the universal themes of human life—birth, death, food, sex, family, knowledge, prayer, light, dark, fear, freedom—and respond to them with symbols, stories, and rituals which take their resonance from Jewish experience.

The "call" is always universal. The "response" is always particular.

Chanukah began, according to the Books of the Maccabees, with the rededication of the Jewish Holy Temple on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, exactly three years to the day after the Syrian-Hellenists had desecrated the Temple.

Let us think of it from the Hellenistic side for just a moment. What was this "desecration"? The Hellenists were celebrating their own sacred ceremony—one that violated Jewish norms. Was there any significance in their choice of a time to practice their ceremony? I think there was. I think they were celebrating the dark time of the year—a festival that the ancient Israelite Torah practice did not include.

But many Jews liked this desecration! They liked this Hellenistic "Christmas"! As our historians keep reminding us and our folk-memory keeps trying to forget, the Maccabean Wars were civil wars: many Jews chose to embrace the culture of Antiochus. There was something attractive about this Hellenism. Embedded in its idolatry there was, perhaps, a spark of God.

So when the victory against Antiochus was won, it could not be a total victory unless it brought this spark into Judaism itself—unless it gave light to the shadow-side of envy. The Maccabees took the Hellenistic solstice ceremony and turned it into a solstice ceremony that celebrated their victory over the Hellenists. Sociologists give this kind of cultural judo a name: "resistance by partial incorporation." Some Jews might describe it differently, as the discovery of a new aspect of Torah, the appearance of a face of God that previously had been veiled in darkness.

The Jewish people exist in order to uncover, always, more light in Chanukah.

So the Maccabees and then, with great changes, the rabbis brought this darkness-festival into Judaism by creating Chanukah. The Maccabees, according to the books of their exploits, made Chanukah an eight-day festival, an imitation of Succot. As guerrillas in the hills, the Maccabees had been unable to celebrate Succot, the eight-day harvest festival, the one Solomon had chosen for the dedication of the Temple.

But the rabbis had a different explanation for the eight days of the festival. They needed another explanation, for they did not like the Maccabees. The example of the Maccabees' rebellion may have inspired the disastrous Bar Kochba uprising against Rome. The rabbis did not want to make heroes of wild-eyed militants, particularly those who brought on the wrath of great empires.

So the rabbis explained the eight-day festival with the story of the missing sacred oil. Came the Maccabean victory, the rabbis said, and the victory proved hollow. The Temple could not be dedicated anyway. The oil, the seed of light, was scarce. There was enough oil to light the great menorah for one day only, a fact that could break the heart of any military victor.

What to do? A reasonable secularist, perhaps a Hellenist, perhaps a Jewish general, would have ordered a delay

of the celebration and made arrangements to press new olive oil.

But there was a miracle. Somebody was unreasonable enough, hopeful enough, faithful enough, celebratory enough, to light the menorah anyway. Celebrate light! What will be, will be. Now that kind of thinking—that's a miracle!

So God, the Universe, history responded. The lamp stayed lit.

What does this have to do with us?

For me, it opens up new richness in Chanukah. A way to make Chanukah for grown-ups.

First of all, I do not have to be embarrassed about the themes of assimilation and separation that weave their way into our own debates about Chanukah and Christmas. Our own uneasiness about the powerful attraction of Christmas, our own fear of assimilation brings many of us to celebrate a Chanukah that begins to look more and more like Christmas. I can laugh: it is God's joke. Not only does Chanukah have its origins in holiday-envy, but it owes its survival to an alien culture. The rabbis refused to include the Books of the Maccabees as part of the Hebrew Bible—so the books were preserved in Greek! These tales of the exploits of the anti-Hellenistic guerrilla band survived only in the language of Hellenism, preserved by the most assimilated Jews of Alexandria, many of whom later became Christians and brought *Maccabees* into the Christian sacred scriptures. This is where nineteenth-century Jews found them as the ghetto walls broke down. They found them and reidentified with those guerrillas and saw in them Jewish Garibaldis, Petofis, Tom Paines, and all the populist-nationalist folk rebels. And they made them the heroes of secular Zionism, reversing the rabbinic judgment and calling for all Jews to celebrate those "glorious brothers." The Zionists conveniently forgot how the Maccabean clan ended, choosing puppet subservience to Rome.

God's joke. What is assimilation, what is authenticity? If, in trying to prevent assimilation, we secretly borrow too much of the culture we are trying to avoid and call it our own, have we *inwardly* assimilated—and is that worse?

God's joke. Is it possible that the Maccabee and the rabbi both have a seed of light?

So let us go deeper. From this new outlook on Chanukah we can learn also what we can learn—and cannot learn—from the Hellenism we call paganism. The pagans cared about the circles of the moon and sun. They were right. It is life-giving to remember that it is deep in the darkness that the light is born. We can learn from paganism, as we can learn from the Maccabees, as we can learn from the rabbis, without becoming pagans or Maccabees or rabbis ourselves. We can go back in order to go forward, study the past in order to create midrash about it. (Going backward in order to go forward is a spiral motion. It makes a spiral in time, just as the Torah scroll and the prayer shawl fringes make a spiral in space. The spiral is the Jewish shape of time.)

In the moment of darkness, it is time to make new light. When Mattathias saw his own kinfolk bow down to idols, that was the darkest moment. The king's decree was a problem, but an expectable one. Kings are always demanding that people bow down to idols—themselves, or some version of themselves. That is practically the business of kings. But that our own, our sisters and brothers, our comrades in the movement, our fellow Jews, should join in bowing down—ahh, that's dark-time.

When that happens, it's time to make light in dark caves, in the hills.

And when victory itself turns to ashes—when we find ourselves saying, "So we won ourselves a state, our modern Maccabees succeeded, but we see no light; we see no dedication to what's holy"—ahh, that's dark-time. And therefore time to light the oil. Time to make the miracle.

How do we use these approaches to enrich our celebration of Chanukah? One suggestion: let it spark your own celebration.

We can turn the lighting of the lights into a focused meditation:

We can light one light the first night, meditate on the sun and moon, on the natural order, on our shadowed planet.

And on the second night do that again, and then light the second candle and meditate on the biology of light, on the effects of the candle-glow upon our minds and spirits.

And on the third night do these meditations again, light the third candle, and meditate on the dark night of resistance, on the moment of becoming Maccabees.

And on the fourth night do all these and meditate on the darkness of empty victory and on how to renew ourselves and take action when darkness falls upon our own best efforts.

And on the fifth night do these all again and then light one candle in a meditation on the moments of darkness for our people, the people of Israel: the moments of Pharaoh, Babylon, Antiochus, the Inquisition, Hitler—and on those who arose to renew us.

And on the sixth night yet again repeat all these and meditate on how our light has kindled that of others, and their light ours: on the exchanges with Hellenism, Christianity, Islam, Marxism, Buddhism.

And on the seventh night recall all these and recite the passage from the Prophets that we read for Chanukah: "Not by might, and not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Breath of Life."

And on the eighth night re-view all these and then focus on the candle itself, on the way its light grows from its own dark heart.

And finally, let us look back at where we started: Christmas. With this approach to Chanukah, why not make Christmas *also*?

When I think of what it means to forge a life-path, the point is to celebrate the richness of each station along the way—but not to skip from path to path, because then one runs the risk of never getting beyond the beginning stations of any one path. There are echoes, patterns, and variations that connect Purim to Pesach to Shavuot to Sukkot to Chanukah to Purim—and these rhythms get disrupted by intrusions of other strains of music which, while holy in their own right, are performed in a different key.

So we are in a sense back where we began, but further along the spiral of understanding. The question becomes how to take a deeper delight in the life-path we are walking. The more our eyes are open to all the "universal" beauty of the path—its lights, shadows, and echoes—the more richly Jewish our walking will become.

It is not that Chanukah exists simply in order to give shape to the Jewish people; instead, the Jewish people exist in order to uncover, always, more light in Chanukah—and therefore in ourselves and in God. □

Dead, Dinner, or Naked

Evan Zimroth

I. Adam and Eve in the Blue Ridge Mountains

Dinner first: some blue-plate special
buzz of Gallo
garden-variety plastic ferns, the weight
of his eyes on her
the snake out of his tree

later they will deflower each other
slightly potted
illegally locked
in a floral motel room
(ersatz colonial)
somewhere
in the Blue Ridge
the blue heaviness of the mountains
blue mists around the trees

though hardly great, or even good
she is book-perfect:
weeping a lot
blue-blooded, a little broken

II. Later, at a Bar in Gramercy Park

Beyond worn-out
they drank California
while she lay on him
all her ancestry
branched and heavy as a candelabra

and he so light
so, even now, without history

between trips to the ladies' room
she told him marvelous drivel
scandal
saying, each time,
don't listen
you shouldn't have to hear this

wide as a shot of valium
wide as an expressway
he listened, prelapsarian,
still thinking he would live forever

III. Much Later, Adam Dreams of Two Women

There is something about him
both twisted and lyrical:
quasi-alcoholic, insomniac, hearing music
in the scrapings of steel

there he is, in bed,
Eve on one hand, a beer in the other,
and *Blue Velvet* on the VCR;
he would be thinking
of some other woman, if there were one,
wondering
what she would do, if

or he is dreaming
into the future of Abraham
having it both ways
with Sarah and Hagar

Adam's sin is now millenia-old:
he could make love
to one while imagining another—
he wants to be clear of the Garden
to fall and be tortured forever

IV. The Forevers

From the fall
of the 2nd Temple to the camps
from the Milvian Bridge
to the camps, from cuneiform
and cunnilingus, starfish
and star wars, from haiku
and terza rima, it is always
good-bye, good-bye, snaking out
of the garden, as if
there were an out, as if
there were anything but dead, dinner, or naked

FILM REVIEW

Better Dead than Read: The Society of Poets

Evan Carton

On the evidence of its box office receipts, newspaper reviews, and inspired audiences, *Dead Poets Society* is a new American classic. Deftly tapping into the romantic literary tradition exalted by its English teacher/hero, John Keating (Robin Williams), the movie appears to stand up (literally, in its stirring final image) for nonconformity, "passionate experimentation," democratic fraternity, rebellion against the forces of oppression, and the principle that "words and ideas can change the world." This stance, however, is an illusion. In its subtle, interesting, and even classic fashion, *Dead Poets Society* is more profoundly stultifying and reactionary—and a better prep school for life among the privileged in corporate America—than Welton Academy (the insensitive authoritarian institution in which it is set).

The movie opens in 1959, during the inaugural ceremony of Welton's centennial year. Washed-out pastel murals of well-dressed schoolboys are juxtaposed with the pale, well-dressed schoolboys lining up beneath the banner of Tradition for the processional into the chapel. A photographer shoots two children, flattening them into tableau. A robed faculty marshal, in the movie's first official words, intones "Settle down." This is the place where lives are framed, stilled, made artificial. Into it comes the young English teacher and Welton graduate bearing the good news that art—poetry—makes life and that it offers the straitened Welton boys scope, voice, themselves. Mr. Keating's role as emancipator is established on the first class day, when he invites those students who are "daring" to call him "O Captain! My Captain!" (the words with which Walt Whitman apostrophizes the slain Lincoln). But exactly from what and to what does he free them? And does his watchword and the film's refrain—*carpe diem,* seize the day—mean something more than or something different from what it means when, unstated but unmistakable, it calls out to us from a thousand advertisements for beer, diet pills, sweepstakes, and sports cars?

How does *Dead Poets Society* mean its message to be taken—now, in 1989—by the mostly young viewers who have emerged from the theater, as its young actors do from Mr. Keating's class, with "*carpe diem*" on their lips? This is a question that the location of the action in the (mythical) past is designed to obscure. In fact, the movie is much less about 1959 than it is for 1989, just as its underlying tone is not romantic hopefulness but veiled cynicism. The year 1959 serves *Dead Poets Society* in the same way that the economically and sexually exclusive Welton Academy does: it legitimates the representation of a homogeneous culture in which oppression is purely formal and difference or resistance a matter of personal style and expression. Except for a couple of early rock 'n' roll tunes, and the allusion in one student's calling the forbidden radio he has built to hear these tunes "Radio Free America," the movie contains no historical references or examples of contemporary consciousness that would preclude its being set in any year since 1916, when Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" (which Mr. Keating quotes) was published. Despite the concern with time implicit in its motto, *Dead Poets Society* in effect removes us from historical time and uses the date 1959 as a particularly apt emblem of that removal. For, in 1989 mythology, 1959 is the year before racial struggle, sexual politics, poverty, war, drugs, decaying cities, and doubt began to appear in America.

At the same time as the movie's choice of date keeps the shadow of such realities from falling across its tale of enslavement and emancipation, the film allows the liberal viewer to imagine that the energies unleashed in the young men who stand defiantly on their desks in the closing scene will find a noble consummation. But the social movements of the sixties, although often rooted in the faith that "words and ideas can change the world," hardly comprise a plausible sequel to the lessons learned in *Dead Poets Society.* Not only is the movie "innocently" sexist and racist; it is antagonistic to social organization in general. At each point of crisis its guru of the extraordinary life disparages and blocks social action or fails to act himself.

Personal mortality is the lesson of Mr. Keating's inaugural class. When he has his students stare at a photograph of an ancient Welton sports team, what he prompts them to see (and what the camera shows us) is not a team but a series of isolated individual faces. "Each and every one of us in this room," he moralizes, "will one day be pushing up daffodils like each face in the picture." Ironically, this sensitivity to personal mortality is meant to stimulate greater concentration on the self rather than any impulse to invest one's individuality in a more enduring social life. Trust your own unique beliefs, "even though the herd might think them unpopular," Mr. Keating advises, articulating the movie's polarized vision of the autonomous individual against the anonymous mass.

Two small but revealing images of athletics at Welton reinforce this polarization. The first, a soccer practice led by Mr. Keating, is prefaced by his definition of sport as "a chance to have other human beings push us to excel." This privatizing view of the essence of sport is then enacted in the form of the practice: to the accompaniment of a romantic symphony that Coach Keating pipes onto the field, each player reads a personalized inspirational verse ("To indeed be a

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God!") and, in turn, boots his own ball into space. By contrast, we are shown an otherwise gratuitous image of the Welton crew, stroking grimly and mechanically under the barked commands of their coxswain, the imperious Headmaster Nolan. It is an image of forced discipline and lockstep conformity, not of cooperative effort toward a shared end.

What replaces society as the locus of human value and the environment of individual life is nature. In this vision, *Dead Poets Society* follows a prominent lead in classic American literature. But even the literary tradition in which Mr. Keating explicitly grounds his philosophy is selectively or inadequately read. When he takes his class into the courtyard and has them walk in groups, in order to illustrate the social coercion that keeps us from marching to the beat of different drummers, Mr. Keating cites Frost's famous "The Road Not Taken" as an example of the triumph of nonconformity and the choice of the "natural" over the crowd's way. The lines he quotes are the last three: "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—/ I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference." The only problem is that, in the poem, Frost's speaker identifies these lines as a story that he will tell "Somewhere ages and ages hence," and he lets the reader know that, when he tells it, he will be lying. The two roads between which he chooses are, to all appearances, identical. The last three lines are scarcely an affirmation of the rewards of an independent nature; rather, they comprise a specious excuse, calculated and prepared for public consumption, for any failures, limitations, or missed opportunities with which the speaker might ever be charged. The misreading of "The Road Not Taken," however, is fitting for a movie in which the injunction to "make your lives extraordinary" offers not so much a call to action as a form of aesthetic and psychological compensation for the presumed futility of action.

Dead Poets Society is on firmer ground with Thoreau, whose account of his withdrawal from the world to Walden Pond is the sacred text of the secret club that Mr. Keating founded and that his students revive. Each meeting of the Dead Poets Society at "the Indian cave," a mile from the school, commences with the passage from *Walden* in which Thoreau explains his decision to take up a life, a mile from the center of Concord, that he repeatedly associates with the American Indian:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life ... and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

Like many nineteenth-century intellectuals, Thoreau here seeks an imaginative return to primitive origins and a renewal of humanity's primal energies in an uncorrupted natural state. More specifically, he reenacts the earliest settlement of America (already a mythic saga by 1846), the begetting of nature's nation by virile pioneers upon what Fitzgerald would later call the "fresh green breast of the new world." But, as Philip Fisher observes in his book *Hard Facts* (1985), Thoreau's repossession of the American wilderness is a union of human and nature, rather than a conflict between human and human, only because that wilderness is sanitized of Indians and of the hard historical fact of European conquest. Thoreau's "woods," in fact, were the private property of his benefactor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who lent them to him for his experiment.

It is the Thoreau of *Walden* (minus his playful, self-ironizing quality) that informs the movie's curriculum, not the Thoreau of "Resistance to Civil Government," "Slavery in Massachusetts," or "A Plea for Captain John Brown." Similarly, "Uncle Walt," whose portrait hangs above Mr. Keating's desk, is a solitary sounder of the "barbaric yawp," not Whitman the relentless pursuer of union and communion, preacher of "the word Democratic, the word En-Masse." Both in the world it represents and in its American literary landscape, *Dead Poets Society* neglects social reality and the presence of the "other" in order to facilitate the individual's more complete fulfillment of an "essential" nature. This neglect is not entirely benign. For as it disqualifies certain groups of people from full human subjectivity, it also makes them available to be possessed as commodities—or more specifically, it makes available for commodity consumption those of their stereotypical attributes that white males might associate with their own release into nature. This is the function generally assigned Blacks and women in *Dead Poets Society*.

The movie's richest visual images all depict mergers between the Welton boys and the natural world. The most breathtaking of these is the image of dark-coated initiates weaving through dark trees on the purple night of the first society meeting. Filmed as a sort of stylized dance, the scene is accompanied by rhythmic, atonal music on which is imposed the sound of chanting, disembodied voices. Director Peter Weir has scripted modern institutional man's reunification with nature in racial terms before, most notably in *The Last Wave* (1977), where a white lawyer rediscovers the repressed core

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of his identity when he gains access to the sacred tribal mysteries of a group of Australian aborigines. In that movie, aboriginal culture begins by offering an alternative reality to, and even a political critique of, the social order that has marginalized it. But in the end this aboriginal culture is used for little more than to provide the stuff of a titillating bourgeois dream of apocalypse.

In *Dead Poets Society*, the absence of Blacks allows the preppies more readily to commandeer the primal energies pervasively associated with African or Afro-American life. Thus, their libidos unfettered by the poetry of the night, the boys conclude their first society meeting in a spontaneous dance to the beat of bongos and the rhythmically repeated lines: "Then I saw the Congo creeping through the black / Cutting through the forest with a golden track." In subsequent meetings, the most restless and rebellious initiate (who, it is remarked, happens to come from the richest family) plays soulful jazz on the saxophone and insists that his name is henceforth changed from Charlie Dalton to Nuwanda. It is worth mentioning, in this connection, that the movie does contain one glimpse of an actual Black face. A society member, Knox Overstreet, has missed a meal in order to seize the day and profess his love to the cheerleader girlfriend of the brawny quarterback at the local high school. Returning to Welton, he passes through the kitchen and, lifting a slice of toast from a tray, brings a conspiratorial finger to his lips as two quizzical workers, one Black, look on: massa's prodigal son winningly petitioning the help's complicity in his high jinks.

The film neglects social reality and the presence of the "other" in order to facilitate the individual's more complete fulfillment of an "essential" nature.

Women are similarly commodified, not as the soul of poetry but as its reward. "Nuwanda" shows up at the cave with two somewhat faded and obviously working-class town girls whose names he has trouble remembering. They swoon when he "composes" on the spot—"Just for you," he tells them—two of the most famous love poems in the English language, at which point the other boys join in the seduction. "I might be going to Yale," one announces. The only girl with a more distinctive role, the cheerleader Chris whose hidden depths Knox touches by his sensitivity and bold perseverance, doesn't seem much deeper. The scene in which she comes to Welton to reject him but ends up accepting him turns on her line "Knox, you are so infuriating," which she squeals twice and punctuates by beckoning him with a teasing smile and a wiggling finger. But, then, this is 1959, when women were stupid and flatteringly flirtatious.

"Language was developed for one purpose. What is it?" demands Mr. Keating one day in class. "To communicate?" offers Neil Perry, his principal acolyte. "No, to woo women," the teacher replies. It is, of course, a joke, but it conveys the truth that, however celebrated, language is accorded no other purpose in *Dead Poets Society* than to enhance personal attractiveness. The hapless pedant J. Evans Pritchard, author of an essay (on how to quantify the excellence of a poem) that Mr. Keating has his students rip out of their textbooks, at least recognizes "importance" as one criterion of literary art. But Mr. Keating is uninterested in the evaluation or specific content of poems because, for him, inspired words can have no *social* consequence. Thus, when Charlie Dalton acts on his teacher's liberationist principle by inserting an unauthorized call for coeducation into the Welton newspaper, Mr. Keating surprises him by disapproving. Sucking the marrow of life does not mean choking on the bones, Keating quips. If Charlie gets himself expelled he'll miss "some golden opportunities." Charlie demands to know what those are, but the movie—which can't have Keating say "the golden opportunities of privilege"—has no other response to offer. Mr. Keating extricates himself with more humor: "If nothing else, the opportunity to take my class." The power of language, it seems, is ultimately insular, self-referential. Mr. Keating asserts as much to another faculty member in two lines of poetry that he admits to having written. Responding to his colleague's objection that encouraging dreams of extraordinariness in his students will only lead to disillusionment and diminish their interest in moderate but real accomplishments, he recites: "But only in their dreams can men be truly free / 'Twas always thus and always thus will be."

This philosophy is borne out by the movie's major plot development: the brilliant performance of Mr. Keating's protégé, Neil Perry, as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and his suicide when his father, who had forbidden him to act, forces him to quit the play and to return to the "prison" of reality. Neil delivers Puck's concluding speech directly to his father, whose unexpected attendance he has noticed:

> If we shadows have offended,
> Think but this, and all is mended,
> That you have but slumbered here
> While these visions did appear.
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding but a dream,
> Gentles, do not reprehend.
> If you pardon, we will mend.
> And, as I am an honest Puck,
> If we have unearned luck
> Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
> We will make amends ere long.

But Neil has no luck, cannot endure his father's sentence of military school as the punishment for his offense, and so makes amends that night by shooting himself. Eloquent onstage, Neil has no voice off it to protest his father's decision. Not *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but *The Tragedy of King Lear* is in force when Neil's father, though angry and forbidding, gives him one brief chance to explain what he feels. "Nothing," he says. "Nothing," his father repeats, and shortly thereafter—as Lear does Cordelia—he holds his dead child in his arms.

A day before the play's opening, after Mr. Perry has discovered his son's disobedience and insisted that he quit, Neil goes to his teacher for advice. Keating has no answers and no substantive questions. He does not offer to intervene, nor does he examine the personal consequences for Neil of openly defying his father. He certainly does not suggest that the case for Neil's participation in this play might be argued for on the grounds of responsibility to others rather than personal creative need. "You are not an indentured servant," the Captain helpfully observes, and urges Neil to

tell his father what is in his heart. He'll understand, Mr. Keating promises, and if he doesn't, "by then you'll be out of school and can do anything you want." Neil responds, "I'm trapped," and Mr. Keating denies it. But Neil is indeed trapped between the contradictory imperatives of his two captains.

If the movie's philosophy makes Neil's suicide inevitable, its artistry makes it sublime. Half-naked, clutching the leafy garland—salvaged from his Puck costume—that has begun to look a lot like a crown of thorns, Neil stands before his bedroom window, open to the snow, and then, as if in a dream, glides slowly downstairs to where his father's gun lies waiting. All the while, we hear the same rhythmic music, the same ghostly chanting, that attended the Welton boys' first ecstatic rush through the forest. This is another of Peter Weir's apocalyptic fulfillments. Neil has joined the pantheon of dead poets. Perhaps it is not the most responsible representation of his deed in a time of much teenage suicide, but, hey, this is art.

Neil's sacrifice, we are meant to think, finally redeems the souls of his fellows, especially that of his roommate, Todd Anderson. Todd, denied a sense of self-worth by his neglectful parents and unable to speak his heart throughout most of the movie, is prompted by Neil's death and by the school's consequent dismissal of Mr. Keating to initiate the rebellion in the last scene. In so doing, Todd stands opposed to Cameron, the betrayer of Neil's memory and the Judas of the Dead Poets Society, who has testified against Mr. Keating to the headmaster. Justifying his decision to trade Keating's future at Welton for his own, Cameron says: "Why ruin our lives? ... You can't save Keating, but you can save yourselves." Given the film's insistent individualism and indifference to social concerns, it is hard to say why Cameron is not simply seizing the day here. Of course, Todd is supposed to be the more faithful disciple, standing up on his desk and calling to his disgraced and departing teacher, "O Captain! My Captain!" But the movie must end with this symbolic gesture because it cannot imagine any action for freedom outside the symbolic. The Captain has no place to lead his troops, a fact that Todd correctly gleans before his conversion. In response to Mr. Keating's assignment to write an original poem, Todd composes—but then tears up—the lines: "We are dreaming of a new day / when a new day isn't coming." The "new day" of *Dead Poets Society* is the same day we have lived over and over again in this decade, and lived too often throughout our history. *Carpe diem* is not revolutionary poetry but America's premier cliché. In the current speech of the sons, it means "go for it." In the controlling discourse of the fathers, it is "business as usual." □

BOOK REVIEW

Thoughts About What Deena Thought About *What Dinah Thought*

Margo Peller Feeley

What Dinah Thought by Deena Metzger. Viking, 1989, 321 pp.

A couple of centuries ago, William Blake wrote: *I give you a golden string / Only wind it into a ball / It will lead you to Heaven's Gate / Built in Jerusalem's wall.*

The poet's golden ball seems to have landed in the court of women novelists. The past twenty years or so especially have seen a profusion of woman-authored novels set in the Holy Land: a few are *The Mandelbaum Gate* by Muriel Spark, *Winter in Jerusalem* by Blanche d'Alpuget, *No Charge for Looking* by Esther Bloch, *Lovingkindness* by Anne Roiphe, *The Master of Return* by Tova Reich, and most recently, *What Dinah Thought* by Deena Metzger.

In many ways, the authors treat Israel as a sort of colony of the Diaspora, just as British women authors treated India at the turn of the century in a subgenre of best-selling novels and novelettes. The colony was a literary outlet for feelings and ideas about escape, sex, romance, magic, and adventure. The Indian romances shared many common features; so do the Holy Land novels. All of them blend or juxtapose past and present (in this they are daughters of Michener's *The Source*); all of them present a heroine who goes to Israel to change it or be changed by it; all feature a forbidden or taboo (to some extent) romance; all treat the setting more metaphorically than literally (the Holy Land as state of mind or configuration of symbols rather than actual place); and all include a mysterious disappearance and restoration. All have happy endings and four end in marriage and motherhood. The Perdita theme is strong in Holy Land novels: the lost girl, the exile, finds herself and follows the golden string from home to homeland.

"Everyone is brought to Israel by the dead, who want to control everything," says Dina Z., the narrator of *What Dinah Thought*. Dina Z., a New York feminist filmmaker and journalist, is brought to Israel by the allure of her biblical namesake. She intends to make

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a film in Nablus about the effect of ruins on nearby inhabitants. During her visit she becomes romantically involved with both an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian.

A specter haunts our culture, the specter of the Heroic Rapist, the ravisher in the bodice-ripper type of romance, whom the heroine at first resists and then yields to with moans of pleasure.

Sound familiar? In *No Charge for Looking,* a New York journalist goes to Nazareth on assignment and falls for both a Jew and a Palestinian. In *Winter in Jerusalem,* Danielle comes to Israel to shoot a film about Masada and has an affair with an Israeli Jew. No Palestinian here. But the opening of d'Alpuget's novel strongly suggests Metzger's: both women struggle with heavy cameras in Lod airport; both women are appalled at their first impression of Israel—a gunslinger's country.

The ancient name for Nablus is Shechem, after the biblical Shechem slain by Levi and Simeon for raping their sister. The tale in Exodus is short and sad: Shechem, a "prince of the land," wants to marry Jacob and Leah's daughter Dinah after raping her, and is tricked into having himself and his people, the Hivites, circumcised in order to be acceptable to the Chosen. While the Hivites are weak and sore, they are slaughtered, and Dinah is taken away.

Imagine, for a moment, another possibility: Metzger's version, suppressed by the patriarchal authors (Author?) of the Bible. Imagine that Dinah and Shechem are two crazy kids in love, just fourteen years old. They arrange a deflowering in order to lower Dinah's market value so that Jacob will *have* to let his daughter marry Shechem. But Dinah's redneck chauvinistic brothers spoil everything, driven by their notion that Dinah is their property with no ideas of her own: "Should he treat our sister as a harlot?"

Imagine, further, that when Levi and Simeon come to take Dinah out of Shechem's house, she refuses to leave her boyfriend's dead body. The brothers return to Jacob, who is embarrassed by the whole mess. "You go, Dad. We can't do anything with her." Jacob goes. By this time, Dinah has dragged the corpse into the crotch of a tree and set it on fire in defiance of the Hebrew custom of burial. Meeting her father's gaze, she rubs the ashes into her mouth and between her legs. Jacob is the first to break eye contact and shambles away, horrified and astonished: How did he fail? Dinah stays with Shechem's sisters, who have shamanistic powers; she goes with them to the grove to worship Asherah, ancestress of the Shekhina (the feminine aspect of Ḏod in Judaism). She rejects war-loving Yahweh—in whose Name her man was killed—for the old nature gods. Metzger's Jacob is a stodgy, bemused businessman who goes to temple once a year. Dinah is his atavistic, rebellious hippie daughter: flower child, cult follower, Perdita—all of these.

Metzger's scenario is intended as a midrash, the beloved folk art of embroidering, amplifying, and explicating a biblical passage. Midrash is the needlepoint accompaniment to the rich tapestry of the Bible. With it Metzger has created a new myth, and myths are created in response to conscious or unconscious longings, fears, desires, and needs. So what exactly is going on here? Why *this* construct?

Dina Z. "has a preoccupation with rape and violence and a constant attraction to men who [are] utterly alien." In three flashbacks, almost casually inserted into the text of the novel like cinematic montage, we see her being molested at age fourteen by an Orthodox rabbi who raises money for Mea She'arim; we see her being raped at knifepoint by a date in Mexico; we see her being sodomized by a blue-eyed stranger with a gun.

What do you do if you've been violated three times, twice by people you trust? Well, you can give up on life and hang yourself—or you can make yourself invulnerable, at least from a psychological point of view, by transforming memory and reality, wresting them into something else.

First you identify with Dinah, let her possess you like a dybbuk. Then you reinterpret what has come down to us as a rape into a consensual act. You put Dinah (yourself) in control: in Metzger's recreation Dinah literally pulls Shechem into her body. It doesn't really matter if it *happened* that way. A miserable past is replaced by a bold invention—a sly turning of the page of the Bible with the left hand.

Metzger's (and Dina Z.'s) identification of one of her rapists with dashing Palestinian activist and archaeologist Jamine Amouri is very clear. When they are still just acquaintances, Jamine takes Dina to the Arab Quarter to try on a Bedouin dress. As she disrobes in the dressing room, she sees Jamine's dark eyes on her face on the other side of the partition (lots of walls, partitions, fences, gates, and barbed wire in this book), and she imagines they are blue like those of the sodomizer who forced her to undress. What does this remind me of? Why am I growing uneasy?

A specter haunts our culture, the specter of the Heroic Rapist. He comes down from the Richardsonian novel (probably from Greek myth: gods plopping down on all those nubile maidens). He is Heathcliff, Jack the Ripper, Dracula, Rhett Butler, Stanley Kowalski, the Midnight Rambler, and the ravisher in the bodice-ripper type of romance, whom the heroine at first resists and then yields to with moans of pleasure (Heroic Rapist meets Willing Victim). It is disturbing to see Metzger, an avowed feminist, seduced by the old myth.

Listen to this description of Jamine: "a fierce and Levantine man with a dramatic sharply-angled nose, a determined jaw, and a full sensuous mouth ... black eyes, hard as bitter pits ..."

Fierce, determined, and sensuous—that's the profile of the Heroic Rapist. These guys are also proud, lean, and tall. They scowl a lot.

When Dina Z. meets Jamine, she is already having an affair with an Israeli lawyer named Joseph, but he is reluctant to use his considerable influence to get her into Nablus, which is closed to tourists. Somehow Jamine gets her admitted, and both Jamine and Joseph become actors in Dina Z.'s film and in her life. A tourist's dream! Two attractive men pause in their struggle over the land to vie for her. Joseph is described as wiry and birdlike. Dina Z. eventually leaves him for Jamine. (Who *wouldn't* prefer the Sheik of Araby to a bird, except maybe Leda?)

Jamine is political but not *too* politi-

cal. He's no quisling, but he's not PLO either. He's sensitive, intelligent, responsible, and nonviolent. In short, he's the good liberal's good Palestinian. Let us look at the Jewish characters in this novel: besides the first-person narrator, there's the Orthodox rabbi who molests her; there's another Orthodox fellow who curses her family for being secular Jews, even though they helped save his daughter from the Holocaust. There is a gaggle of stone-throwing schoolgirls in Mea She'arim. There is Joseph, who is weak and equivocating. (All the cards are stacked against him in the romance department—Jamine is better looking, sexier, and forbidden fruit.) There is boorish kippa-clad Lev (read Levi), member of the Israeli Defense Forces, who interrupts Dina Z. and Jamine *in coitus,* crying "Rape!" and aiming *his* gun. There is also a dead character, Jeremy, with whom Dina Z.'s friend Sybil is obsessed just as Dina Z. is obsessed with the dead Shechem. A famous Israeli folksinger, Jeremy killed himself by stepping on a mine in protest against the constant state of war. Is Metzger saying that the only good Jewish male is a dead one?

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Now I am growing more than uneasy. At the beginning of the novel, Metzger writes: "May this Midrash be in the service of Peace and be an act of *tikkun olam* [healing]." I am thinking that for a novel committed to peace and healing, there is an awful lot of hate here. Hatred of Orthodox Jews, who are depicted as monsters. And self-hatred, for what else can we say about a Jewish author who makes nearly all the Jews look bad and only the Palestinian look good? Even this backfires, because Jamine is *so* good, so clearly what one would want him to be, that he is cardboard (a bit like Jewish Daniel Deronda in George Eliot's great novel).

It *is* possible to be evenhanded in the depiction of character when dealing with the tensions and rival claims of the Holy Land. Muriel Spark created complex and well-rounded Palestinian, Jewish, and Christian characters in *The Mandelbaum Gate.* In Esther Bloch's *No Charge for Looking,* the heroine discovers that her Palestinian lover and her Jewish lover are really quite similar. In Tova Reich's *Master of Return,* the religious characters are wacky but neither saints nor sinners. In *Lovingkindness,* Annie comes to Jerusalem with a grudge against the ultra-Orthodox community, whom she thinks has brainwashed her daughter, but she leaves with quite a different impression.

Dina Z. and Jamine find Heaven's Gate on top of a mountain. This is no mere "one night stand" but an act intended to unite past and present, two ancient cultures, and bring peace to the world. Even in the novel's own terms, it doesn't work. Dina Z. precipitates an international flap and nearly gets Jamine killed. He disappears mysteriously—we are led to think the Israelis shot him—but at the end he turns up alive and well in Cairo while Dina Z. returns to the States to give birth to their daughter. The novel ends with Dina Z. making plans to join Jamine in Cairo.

What kind of *tikkun olam* is this? A passionate night on a mountaintop might be fun for Dina Z. and Jamine, but as a political act it fails miserably. In fact, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as presented in this book, serves merely as backdrop, like the picture of a gloomy castle on the cover of a supermarket paperback. "Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul," Thomas Pynchon says in *Gravity's Rainbow,* and similarly Israel may be the extension of the American soul. Dina Z. mistakes personal gratification for politics; after her Israeli adventure, she runs off to live in bliss with her lover and daughter in the safety of Cairo. And what does Metzger's ending say about feminism and the role of women? Why is it that Dina Z.'s most defiant acts are forbidden lovemaking and childbearing?

The sex-cum-spirituality theme was common to the body of works produced by the late nineteenth-century Indian romancers. Tantric rites, interracial or forbidden trysts on mountaintops or in groves, danger, political intrigue, melodrama—all are typical features of this subgenre. Somehow Deena Metzger has fallen through a time warp into a tradition of seeing an exotic land and culture in sensationalistic terms, terms which reveal more about the eye than what it beholds. She began her novel with an interesting idea, embodied in the title *What Dinah Thought.* I wish Deena had stayed with Dina Z.'s imaginative recreation of what Dinah thought and resisted the temptation to try to solve the problems of the Middle East. ☐

Book Review

Liberal Lamentations

Fred Siegel

Rediscovering American Values: A provocative dialogue that explores our fundamental beliefs and how they will lead us into the future, by Frances Moore Lappé. Ballantine Books, 1989, 352 pp.

Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America, by David Vogel. Basic Books, 1989, 337 pp.

Initially, leftists and liberals reacted to the triumph of Reaganism by denying that it had really occurred. For example, the *Nation* and *Mother Jones* explained away the 1980 election by arguing that barely more than a quarter of all Americans (counting nonvoters) had actually voted for the new president. Liberal journalists wrote knowingly that Reagan's victory was the product of little more than "blue smoke and mirrors," the handiwork of slick and cynical campaign consultants. Learned tracts and public opinion surveys suggested that, because Americans still favored a range of government programs, there had been no "right turn." But by the 1988 election, denial had been replaced by numerous calls for renewal. There was only a passing concern for why it all had happened. Failure, it seems, was too painful to explain.

Frances Moore Lappé's *Rediscovering American Values* is one of those calls for renewal. Lappé, an unabashed liberal who is widely respected for her writings on world hunger, argues that liberalism is suffering from a failure of nerve. It can revive, she argues, only by proudly displaying its true, that is, its egalitarian colors. David Vogel, the author of *Fluctuating Fortunes,* is a former liberal who now takes a more detached view of his old flame. Perhaps that is what enables him to look unblinkingly into the causes of the liberal collapse.

Lappé surveys the political landscape left by Reaganism and asks, "... how did we arrive at this painful impasse?" Her answer develops into, as the book's subtitle puts it, *A provocative dialogue that explores our fundamental beliefs and how they will lead us into the future.* In practice, this means an ongoing exchange of point and counterpoint between a left-liberal who is a compassionate communitarian and a right-winger who is a reactionary, free-market individualist. Lappé, who supports the first position, plays both roles as she debates herself on freedom, fairness, and the free market. But while her biases are clear, she, unlike most partisans, has made a real effort to read and understand the other side. The text is sprinkled with quotes from Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman, and the like.

A serious problem with this schema is that the real debate has not been a simple two-sided affair with socially conscious left-liberals standing on one side and proponents of an unfettered free market on the other. Take the recent Supreme Court decision in *Texas v. Johnson,* which declared flag burning a legal form of free expression. It was Justice Brennan, the archetypically left-liberal justice, who defended flag burning by invoking the idea of the free marketplace. By contrast, the right-wing Chief Justice Rehnquist derided Brennan's marketplace metaphors while evoking the spirit of community.

Sensitive to the excesses of capitalist individualism, Lappé is blind to the excesses of cultural individualism. The swirl of the market, whether it be in money or morals, destabilizes everything it touches. It generates an asocial privatism, a cult of instant gratification, and a relentless pursuit of self-interest regardless of the social cost. Many American neighborhoods are being destroyed both because they are defenseless before an increasingly internationalized marketplace and because they are victimized by what legal libertarians, the left-liberal spokespeople for a free market in morals, describe as the "victimless crime" of drug use.

In fact, rather than some clear, ongoing division between free marketeers and communitarians, different interest groups operate from whichever perspective fits the moment. The savings and loan gonifs, who in the early eighties spoke rhapsodically of returning to the free market, turned statist in the late eighties when the costs of deregulation—literally hundreds of billions of dollars—came due. Similarly, gay activists, who before AIDS spoke of getting "the government off our backs," now decry the lack of sufficient state action on their behalf. And to make matters even more muddled, gay activists looking for an AIDS cure have recently joined hands with free marketeers in order to overturn the testing requirements for new drugs. These are the same safeguards for which public interest reformers had fought so hard in the wake of the thalidomide scandal in the early sixties.

Another problem with Lappé's analysis is that, as in so many calls for liberal renewal, the history and experience of the past two decades are dealt with inadequately. The explosive growth of crime, the fear of the underclass, the escalating rate of divorce, the open politicization of the judiciary, the collapse of command economies around the world, and the fate of economic regulation at home are all missing from the dialogue.

In fact, recent politics of the economy, argues David Vogel in *Fluctuating Fortunes,* has hinged not on the existence of free markets but on when, how, and to what extent such markets should be regulated by government. Vogel's focus is on the rise (between 1964 and 1977) and the fall (between 1978 and 1986) of what was virtually a second

Fred Siegel teaches at Cooper Union. He will be spending the 1989–90 academic year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His award-winning series of articles on the 1988 election appeared in Commonweal.

New Deal for economic regulation.

From the Progressive Era through the New Deal and up until 1964, the Food and Drug Administration was the only federal agency created to protect the public from corporate malfeasance. But, according to Vogel, over the next thirteen years Congress established "ten new agencies with a similar mandate." They range from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1964) to the Environmental Protection Agency (1970), to the Consumer Products Safety Commission (1972). In addition, in the early seventies lawmakers enacted what Vogel calls "the most progressive tax bill in the postwar period," and reduced the oil depletion allowance. Overshadowed by wars over culture, race, and Indochina, this extraordinary record never received a unifying sobriquet.

The strong though anonymous movement to restrict the power of the market and regulate corporate power was, says Vogel, driven by two trends. First, since prosperity was assumed to be permanent, it didn't seem unreasonable to place new demands on corporate America. Second—and this is hard to imagine today—big business, barely a presence in Washington at the time, was politically unorganized and unsophisticated. It was, in the short run, no match for the reformers, the public interest lawyers (Nader's Raiders), who were inspired by the antiestablishment sentiments of the sixties. Supported by sympathizers in the press, the reformers reformulated the terms of regulatory politics. "In the 1970s," writes Vogel, as a stunned business sector stood by, "the public-interest movement replaced organized labor as the central countervailing force to the power and values of American business."

What happened to reverse this? Why did the tide turn toward deregulation and Reaganism? Ironically, Vogel argues, the economic slump of the mid-seventies made the public more solicitous of business interests. With prosperity no longer taken for granted, the public grew more sympathetic to American corporations under fire from foreign competitors. In addition, large and small businesses effectively copied the grassroots organizing techniques of reformers. The auto makers, for instance, mobilized their many dealers and suppliers into a national political network. This is surely important, but Vogel suggests something more.

"America," he writes, "may continue to be an exception among capitalist democracies in terms of the relatively small size of its public sector, but, in other respects, the American government is highly interventionist: no other capitalist nation has established such extensive controls over business decisions. . . ." The conflict between the capitalists and their critics, which in Europe means a battle about socialism, became, in America, a clash between competing and hostile elites: Ivy League–trained public interest lawyers against their corporate counterparts.

In America, the regulatory battles over everything from product safety to energy conservation took on an aspect of class conflict—without, however, generating mass support for either side. This was fatal for the reformers. They pursued their agenda before courts and congressional committees. Their organizational ties to the rest of the country were, like those of the neoliberal politicians who espoused their ideas, dependent on the media. This meant that when business counterattacked and the media's mood turned against government intervention, the reformers, who lacked the kind of bedrock constituency the unions once enjoyed, were stripped of their once sacrosanct status. They were vulnerable to the charge that they were just a new version of an old type, the despised Washington insider. Business spokesmen effectively tagged the public interest reformers as bureaucratic busybodies. By contrast, corporate publicists presented business, implausibly but successfully, as populist because it presented itself in, for example, many Mobil ads as "for the people" against big government.

Frances Lappé assumes that public opposition to government activity is simply a product of America's ideological bondage to free market ideas. But, as Vogel's portrait and as opinion survey after survey make clear, most Americans are, within broad bounds, ideologically agnostic. At any given time, they respond to what they perceive to be the capacities of competing institutions. Many former supporters of the New Deal turned against an activist government in the seventies because of its failed policies, not because the activists' principles had altered. During the oil crisis and recession of 1975, Americans voiced a good deal of hostility toward the big oil companies. But that hostility never translated into a liberal alternative—such as a TVA-style federal oil firm that could serve as a yardstick by which to measure the behavior of the petroleum giants. Proponents of such a proposal were stymied by the widespread feeling that the government couldn't be trusted to do the job right.

The swirl of the market destabilizes everything it touches and generates an asocial privatism, a cult of instant gratification, and a relentless pursuit of self-interest.

Mistrust of the state continued to hamstring the growth of antibusiness sentiment during the eighties. Even though deregulation has been a monumental failure in air transport and banking, few people favor the government's stepping in to reregulate. Recent surveys by pollsters Stanley Greenberg and Celinda Lake indicate both broad support for more federal spending on health care and antipoverty programs, and a disdain for government itself. An institution unable to meet its minimal obligations to provide for public safety and sound education is widely judged to be incapable of taking on new and more daunting tasks.

In such a climate, the kind of activist liberalism Lappé advocates can sound, despite her best intentions, not only naive but self-serving—self-serving because it has become the ideology of those people at the heart of the Democratic party who either dispense or receive an important share of federal services. They thus have no reason to rethink the role of government in American life.

But there is a way out. In a recent speech entitled "The Politics of Ideas," Ted Kennedy (who supported a government oil corporation in the seventies) insisted that the Democrats should seize the opportunity created by the lack of a compelling Bush agenda. Like Lappé, Kennedy asserted the need for liberals

to reaffirm their commitment to egalitarian values. But he also argued that this would come to naught unless there was a new spirit of "public enterprise," one that held government programs to a stricter standard of achievement. Without a demonstrated ability to make good on its mission, calls for more federal activism will continue to make liberalism seem the ideology of just another set of special interests. □

BOOK REVIEW

America's Other Asian War

Barton J. Bernstein

Korea: The Unknown War by Bruce Cumings and Jon Halliday. Pantheon, 1988, 224 pp.

"We must draw the line somewhere" to stop the Kremlin, declared General Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a high-level, secret Washington meeting convened on June 25, 1950, to deal with the reported North Korean attack across the thirty-eighth parallel on the then recently divided peninsula. President Harry S. Truman said he agreed with Bradley. So did Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the president's most trusted foreign-policy adviser. Thus began America's armed intervention in Korea, a conflict which Truman, to avoid asking Congress for a declaration of war, called a "police action," and which soon received the backing of a United Nations Security Council the Soviets were boycotting.

After a year of bitter fighting that resulted in a near stalemate on the ground, the war dragged on for another two years until July 1953, when an armistice was finally signed. By then, the United States had lost almost 54,000 lives, the Chinese Communists thousands more, and the Koreans over a million. The war had cost the United States billions of dollars, strained the already weak Chinese economy, further soured relations with Mao's government, and ravaged much of Korea.

It had also further narrowed America's political culture by fanning the flame of virulent anticommunism and provoking harsh right-wing attacks on the Truman administration. Some critics charged the president and Acheson with incompetence or betrayal; echoing General Douglas MacArthur, these critics maintained there was "no substitute for victory." Either win or withdraw, they demanded.

To Truman, Acheson, and their defenders, however, American armed intervention was both necessary and necessarily limited: America had to fight in Korea to block the Kremlin elsewhere (in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East) and to protect Korea itself. In this view, MacArthur and his adherents were reckless, the Truman administration was prudent, and the American involvement was just.

Such views were occasionally challenged by the dwindling liberal Left in the early 1950s, most notably by I. F. Stone in *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (1952). His unsettling questions about whether the North started the war, about whether Stalin had instigated it, and about America's mass bombing of noncombatants were largely ignored in cold war America. For nearly two decades, the dominant western scholarship reflected the Truman-Acheson interpretation.

The Korean War largely escaped public reassessment during the 1960s, despite growing hostility to the Vietnam War. When Stone's book was reissued in 1967, it received far more attention than it had received in the early 1950s, and some scholars began working on the war's origins and causes; but most who sought to understand American intervention in Indochina skipped over America's earlier war in Asia.

In the early 1970s, that pattern changed. In *The Limits of Power* (1972), Joyce and Gabriel Kolko boldly placed the Korean War in the larger framework of American imperialism in the Third World. At about the same time, two scholars who had not yet met, Bruce Cumings and Jon Halliday, began to develop revisionist theses. The Kolkos had suggested that the war was both a social-revolutionary struggle (Left against Right in the South) and a civil war (the Republic of Korea [ROK] in the South against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DPRK] in the North). Halliday, a British scholar, also argued that South Korea had first attacked on June 25th, and that the North Koreans had then responded.

In 1981, Cumings produced a magisterial, prizewinning volume, *The Origins of the Korean War.* In it, he focused not on 1950–53 but on 1945–46. Fluent in Korean and familiar with all the relevant archives, Cumings argued that the United States had suppressed an indigenous social revolution in Korea. Even before American troops reached Korea in September 1945 to receive the Japanese surrender, Korean revolutionary committees, dominated by the native Left, ruled on the peninsula and were seeking to transform what had long been a colonial society. The pattern in Korea, Cumings maintained, was part of the later American postwar effort to suppress the Left in Third World countries, to try to guide those societies along American lines, and to side, however reluctantly, with the Right. In his view, American leaders were not malevolent but misguided. Unlike the Kolkos, who often offended readers with their harsh style, Cumings expressed a sense of tragedy and of

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missed opportunities for both Korea and the United States.

Cumings's work, soon translated into Korean, became an influential book in the South, where it is often cited by dissidents to demonstrate the malevolence of American influence and to challenge the legitimacy of the ROK government. Presumably to counter such sentiments, the American government sent to Korea one scholar of the war who, though he could neither read nor speak Korean, presented what one critic dubbed the "lollipop" view of American policy, a Truman-Acheson version of the war and its origins.

The vituperative historical dialogue within Korea, embedded as it is in the continuing armed division of that nation, has not been matched in the West. Unlike the polemics that have frequently marked debate about the origins of the cold war, Korean War scholars in the West have usually seemed civil, even polite, toward one another. Of course, beneath the surface, arguments do rage; the antirevisionists often complain that their scholarship is not appreciated by the academy. But the absence of scholarly fireworks may be one reason why the true history of the war remains hidden from the view of all but specialists.

To remedy this, Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings recently got together to serve as advisers on a BBC-TV documentary on the war and to write an accompanying volume, *Korea: The Unknown War.* Packed with pictures but lacking footnotes, it is an important book that presents their rich and provocative argument about the war—its origins, its development, and its larger significance.

"Like Vietnam, Korea was a civil and revolutionary war," the authors state. It did not really start in 1950, they stress, but in 1945, when the United States, upon arriving in South Korea, overthrew the people's committees and helped install a right-wing government. Ideally, according to the authors, General John Hodge, the American commander in Korea, would have preferred to find a middle way between the Left and the Right, a route more consonant with American politics. "We always have the danger of fascism taking over when you fight communism," Hodge unhappily acknowledged in 1947. "It is a very difficult political situation that we run into. Germany was built up by Hitler to fight communism, and it went to nazism.... On the other hand, when the communists build up ... democracy is crushed." In virtual despair, Hodge asked, What is the answer here in Korea? "How in the dickens are you going to get political-in-the-middle-of-the-road out of the mess.... I don't know the answer."

There was none. A 1948 CIA report described the leadership of the Korean Right as "a small class which virtually monopolizes the wealth" and collaborates with the Japanese in order to maintain its favored position. As a result, "it has experienced difficulty in finding acceptable candidates." It had to support a man like Syngman Rhee, a well-known Korean patriot who was without any pro-Japanese taint. He was, the CIA stated, "essentially [a] demagogue bent on authoritarian rule." He was the leader of "America's Korea, the ROK."

In the North, the Soviets supported anti-Japanese resistance leaders, helped install Kim Il Sung, and bullied his opponents. They were variously jailed, killed, or allowed to flee south. By 1948, this new state, the DPRK, was sufficiently stable that the Soviets largely withdrew their military forces, leaving only a few advisers.

The South, with American troops remaining into mid-1949, was a far more fractious place. Under Rhee, the South's army, headed by former collaborators with Japan, was often involved in putting down rebellions. So bad were conditions in one area that 20,000 homes were destroyed, a third of the population of 100,000 was in protected villages, and about 30,000 were killed. "The all-out guerrilla extermination campaign came to a virtual end," the American embassy reported in mid-1949, "with order restored and rebels and sympathizers killed, captured, or converted."

In 1949–50, both North and South were dedicated to unification by force. In a secret 1949 letter, Rhee clearly expressed his intentions: "I feel strongly that now is the most psychological moment when we should take an aggressive measure [and attack]. We will drive some of Kim Il Sung's men to the mountain region and ... starve them out. Then our line of defense must be strengthened along [the Sino-Soviet border]." Each month, there were clashes across the thirty-eighth parallel. Both sides were at fault; although one American official concluded that the South started more of the battles. In late 1949, the American ambassador was so fearful that the ROK would launch a major war against the North that he threatened to halt American economic and military aid. Ambassador John Muccio also reported that he had heard that Chiang Kai-shek "told Rhee that the Nationalist air force could support a move north."

Because both North and South have blamed each other for initiating combat on June 25, 1950, and there was no objective observer to these crucial events, it has never been possible to determine definitively who started the war and how it occurred. Citing Rhee's earlier threats and actions, I. F. Stone in 1952 had suggested that the ROK probably started the war. But recent findings make this unlikely: the ROK's military was weaker than the North's; the South's forces were not arrayed in position for an attack; American troops had left in mid-1949, and it appeared unlikely that they would be recommitted for a war in 1950; and Nikita Khrushchev later disclosed that Kim planned to attack in order to trigger a revolution in the South.

Such evidence is admittedly circumstantial. Halliday and Cumings are themselves uncertain about how the war began and who started it. They suggest various interpretations: a nationalist Chinese plot with Rhee; an unprovoked Northern invasion; or a Northern response to a Southern attack across the parallel.

Like other recent analysts, the authors minimize the role of the Soviet Union in the war. Yet rather than arguing that the Soviets were caught unprepared when the war broke out, that Kim Il Sung had "jumped the gun," the authors, without any evidence, propose rather novel possibilities: that Stalin wanted the UN to act in order to draw the United States into a peripheral war or to dramatize that the UN was primarily an American tool.

In June 1950, the Truman administration, as well as most U.S. citizens, assumed that North Korea was a Soviet puppet and that the Soviets instigated the war. The big question in Washington was how, not whether, to respond. While General Bradley and some other

military advisers agreed that it was time to "draw the line" against the Soviet Union, they feared committing ground troops. Truman and Acheson swept over the military's doubts and committed the American army to the war.

Strangely, Cumings and Halliday do not dwell on why Korea seemed so important to American leaders. Did the U.S. see the war primarily as a test of Soviet aggression, intended to stop communism elsewhere, especially in Europe? Or were American leaders, as Cumings contended in a 1983 essay, mostly concerned about Korea for itself and because of the potential markets it could provide for Japan?

Like most recent revisionist critics, Halliday and Cumings stress that the U.S. decision to cross the thirty-eighth parallel, to redefine its war aims to include unification, and to move toward the Yalu was not forced on a reluctant administration. During July of 1950, when American forces were still struggling to hold part of South Korea, advisers were already thinking about "liberating" the North. MacArthur's successful Inchon landing in September opened the way for the unification effort that Washington, as well as MacArthur, desired. Washington was not forced into this risky, and ultimately disastrous, venture by its vainglorious Pacific commander.

After a small-scale Chinese intervention in late October 1950, MacArthur used heavy bombing to create a virtual wasteland between the ground combat and the Chinese border. Incendiaries and napalm were dropped on villages and cities, destroying factories, killing thousands of noncombatants, and leaving many miles of "scorched earth." But the bombing did not prevent the entrance of a larger Chinese force, although its numbers, the authors argue, were only about 50,000, added to about 150,000 North Koreans. If these numbers are roughly correct, MacArthur was, in fact, a poor commander. He had larger forces, was caught unprepared, and hastily retreated. Acheson and Truman would be delighted by this portion—and probably by this portion only—of the book.

As UN troops hurtled southward, they torched and blew up key southern cities to deny their resources to the North. In this fashion, Inchon and Seoul, among others, were left in ruins. General Matthew Ridgway soon reconsidered this policy, telling one of his assistants, "I have been struck by those areas I have visited which had formerly been occupied by the CCH [Chinese]. There appeared to have been little or no vandalism committed. [We must not engage in] wanton destruction of towns and villages, by gunfire or bomb, unless there is good reason to believe them occupied."

Amid the bleakness of looming defeat, Washington considered a wider war. In late November 1950, President Truman suggested he might use nuclear weapons. Unassembled atomic bombs were deployed secretly on an aircraft carrier off Korea. The Joint Chiefs recommended unleashing Chiang's forces against the Chinese mainland. And MacArthur himself asked for discretion in using nuclear weapons.

Recently declassified materials, cited by the authors, indicate how close the administration came to using the bomb. In April 1951, for example, shortly before MacArthur was fired, the Joint Chiefs recommended nuclear retaliation against bases in Manchuria *if* masses of new Chinese troops entered the war. Truman approved this strategy, and even transferred some atomic bombs to military custody. A tantalizing question lingers: What would Truman have done? Perhaps the United States came close to dropping A-bombs on Asians once again.

Though *officially* the United States was not carrying the war to China, actually it was. Much of the material on these clandestine activities remains classified, but enough is available to suggest some dimensions of this hidden war. The United States bombed a major Chinese city across the Yalu and increased CIA activities on the mainland. The CIA wanted to go further, and, according to a former agent, "was supporting an attempt to invade communist China."

The book also raises the troubling question of whether the United States did, as China charged in 1952, conduct germ warfare. At the time, such accusations were easily dismissed in the West. The Truman administration denied them and few Americans believed the United States would ever do something so heinous. But now scholars have discovered that the American government, in defiance of international standards, protected Japanese germ-warfare experts from war-criminal prosecution in 1945 and later employed them. Admitting there were lies on both sides, the authors properly conclude "the issue is still open" on the 1952 germ-war charges.

In 1953, write Halliday and Cumings, the war ended through a combination of President Eisenhower's nuclear threats, America's bombing of key irrigation dams in North Korea, and the softening of Soviet policy after Stalin's death. But because Syngman Rhee threatened to sabotage the armistice negotiations, there was serious consideration of removing him. From London, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had long wanted this draining war to cease, cabled that Rhee should be "arrested or dismissed from office." The American commander in Korea even dusted off "Operation Everready," a plan first devised under Truman to eliminate Rhee. But in the end the Eisenhower administration decided to stick with the dictatorial South Korean ruler, partly because he had killed off all possible replacements! The administration then had to buy him off with pledges of considerable economic aid and a mutual security pact, the same treaty that today remains the basis for having American troops in South Korea.

In recent years, the renewed quest for unity in American foreign policy has led to viewing our involvement in the Indochina War as an anomaly; *Korea: The Unknown War* inspires a more probing analysis. America's intervention in Korea, interpreted at the time as essential to American interests, was a dramatic example of involvement in the Third World to stop the Left and block revolution. Such intervention, justified by the then acclaimed belief in internationalism, represented the dominant position of the Democratic party and the Dewey-Eisenhower wing of the Republican party. This interventionist policy persisted into the early 1970s, and Reagan tried to revive it in Central America.

Korea: The Unknown War also stands as a testament to I. F. Stone, whose pioneering study of the Korean conflict almost forty years ago raised questions that cold war America found easy to ignore. □

FICTION

Premonitions

Elisha Porat

Translation by Alan Sacks

The day after that night, Ayalla said to him, I really knew and I really felt it. I guessed that he would not return from that army reserve duty. Goel answered her, this is nonsense, people always try to show how wise they are after a tragedy. But Ayalla was stubborn and said, no, this time I knew, and I think that he knew, too. She told Goel how Yeky turned pale when he received his call-up order, and how he had said to her, Ayalla, this time I am really afraid. Goel reminded her of the difficult days of the War of Attrition, when everyone called to the borders was at risk. But she did not give in and told him of strange dreams that had come to her before Yeky had gone off to the army. She still had not told Goel how they had behaved in the final days before his departure. There had been a secret agreement between them and they had celebrated in the last month before he left. And inadvertently they would say to one another, come Ayalla, give me a last kiss. Come Yeky, hug me this last time for who knows if you will come back. She also asked Yeky if they could go to Ein Hod, because there was a corner there, or two, between the rocks that he so loved, and she knew that he yearned to visit the spot one more time. To sit there on the bench or on an exposed boulder, to gaze from the heights of the hill at the open sea below, at the wall of the fortress at Atlit, at the whole beautiful valley below. And to feel, together with Yeky, that someone needed to rise from the valley, someone that they were eagerly awaiting. But the trip never got going because Ayalla was unable to break away from her work. And now it is already a month and then some that Yeky has been dead and she still has not found the time to visit Ein Hod.

Goel promised that he would go with her to Ein Hod and show her wonderful niches that even Yeky had never known. But Ayalla suddenly became sad and said that she would very much like to sit on the same bench that Yeky loved and to gaze at the sea and the green valley below. And among the things that he said to her before his death, something she still had not fathomed, there was the story of the man who needed to rise from the sea, from the Bay of Atlit, and to hover over the waves without becoming wet, and to rush to the hills and to the groves around the enchanting village of Ein Hod.

By the by, Goel asked her whether she remembered what the great sages had said in their tracts of wisdom on the situation in which they found themselves. Ayalla answered that she still had not managed to study them and would like to drop all of her affairs, to open the right books and to know a little of what the sages had said, to appreciate a bit of their wisdom and to learn the source of their strength. Goel said to her that the sages said, a divorced man and a divorced woman bring four minds to bed, and Ayalla had some trouble understanding the opinion of the sages and he explained the adage to her. And as if of herself, as if she were an attentive student, she asked what the sages had said about a bachelor and a widow in bed. How many minds are there then? Goel said that she may not have fully understood what they had meant. The minds are like people; a divorced man and a divorced woman carry with them, wherever they go, especially to bed, their previous partners. Their words, their touch, their memories. And the bachelor and the widow, that is not exactly the same thing. For the bachelor has no other mind trailing him to bed, because he has not brought any woman he loved to the bed of the widow. The widow also is not comparable to a divorcée because it is as though the moment of death has severed her ties to the mind of the man who was her beloved.

Ayalla moved away from his arms and mumbled in a hushed voice that the bachelor and the widow had not sinned against anyone or hurt a single person. Because a person is not bound by them. But, all the same, Goel had the feeling that Ayalla had not fully absorbed the words of the sages, that it was not so that all her previous life with Yeky Margolin would be forgotten and erased as though it had never existed. And Goel, who saw her doubts, said to her that this was only an interpretation and everyone can interpret the words of the sages as they like. If it is difficult to accept some part

Elisha Porat is a member of Kibbutz Ein-Hakhoresh. This story is an excerpt from The Messiah of La Guardia, *published in Hebrew in Israel (Zmora, Bitan, 1988).*

or portion of their words, there is no need to be stubborn, and everything he had said he said only to calm her and distract her from her grief. For he already had learned that whenever she would begin to speak about her earlier premonitions, it never ended well. But Ayalla was not eased by his words and shrank into the corner of the bed and said that sometimes it cuts inside her, the pain of her loss, and how is it that only a month had passed and Yeky was already gone and forgotten? How is it that their friends had already scattered, each one to his own home, and of all the wonderful and beloved friends who had surrounded her in the first days of mourning, not a single one now remained? And how is it they had promised her that a representative of his unit would come regularly and bring her documents and all sorts of mementos of Yeky that were left at the unit's office, and no representative had come? Goel turned on his side and drew Ayalla to him and pushed her clenched fists into his wounded shoulder and said, I don't forget, Ayalla. This shoulder reminds me of him every night.

Around the thirtieth day, Goel had a free hour at noon and went to the cemetery. He knew that Ayalla went there frequently, but he had never asked her for details because he had the feeling that she was not ready to include him in her trips there. But one time he made a mistake and did not hold back and asked what he asked, and Ayalla flared up at once and behaved as though she were still a little girl, as though Goel were a strict teacher about to bully her, and she said to him very clearly that he should not interfere in matters that were between her and Yeky in the cemetery. Goel was stung a little by her words, but did not reply and tried hard to keep his distance from her whenever he sensed the spirit move her to the gravestone.

He walked after her below the shaded lane of trees. He was always drawn by the unknown gardener who had planted the avenue intermittently full in form as it was. The fig trees gave way to cypresses and these were replaced with oaks. The high branches of the oaks were full of birds screeching shrill cries as they flitted about the trees. Suddenly he was gripped by a feeling that he was striding below the green roof of the avenue as though on a journey of mourning. Wild wailings of grief accompanied him in the midst of the branches. Even as he knew that there were no shouts of mourning here, nothing more than the shrieks of kingfishers and the gurgling of wild pigeons and the call of the jays, it seemed to him for just a moment that someone accompanied him on his journey and was closely following him. Suddenly, a beautiful blue kingfisher landed on his chest, twitched and screamed as though it were wine-smitten. At first, Goel was a bit frightened and tried to dislodge the excited bird from his chest and fling it back toward the avenue. But the kingfisher drove its claws into the cloth of his shirt and Goel was unable to remove it.

After that, Goel saw a strange pink cloud hovering above the avenue. He did not understand what the cloud was doing in the middle of the sky, near to the middle of the afternoon, at the end of summer. He stood below a clearing amidst the trees, forgot the kingfisher chattering to itself on his chest, and followed, as though bewitched, the movements of the uninvited cloud. And the cloud ran wild in the clear blue sky. It changed its form and acted strangely, as though it were swirls of smoke or a scrap of fog, and not a pink cloud on a summer afternoon. Goel contemplated it and felt as he did so that someone was watching him. He was seized with a slight fear, and a shudder even passed through his body. Someone had sent him clear signals and he did not understand their meaning. First the kingfisher, after that the pink cloud, and what else would he see on the short route to the cemetery?

When he continued on the slope of the avenue, a strong wind suddenly rose up around him. All at once, it churned up thousands of fallen leaves into a kind of whirlwind that penetrated his clothing and sent a tingle through his skin. The trees of the avenue swayed in the wind like supple grasses and in a moment the afternoon light grew dark, and Goel saw that the congregation of birds had fallen into a panic and in dense swarms burst from the shelter of the high boughs, circling the trees in terror. The screams of the birds mingled with the whistling of the wind and Goel Zichrony asked himself, what the hell is going on?

Were he to describe these events to Ayalla, it would reinforce her belief in premonitions. And she would go on and on with the nonsense of her earlier feeling, when Yeky was called to reserve duty. She even knew before she told him that the duty would be long and difficult on the new border on the Golan Heights. She was able to see in her eyes the gloomy basalt mounds, the yellowing fields of stubble, and the propagating crowns of the globe thistles swaying in the enduring breeze that never ceased to blow there. One time during the month of mourning that had passed, he said to her, Ayalla, do you know the meaning of my name? She turned and looked at him in her quiet way, and he gained control over his smile and said to her in a serious vein, Ayalla, do you know the meaning of Goel Zichrony? She answered that she had never given any thought to the meaning of his name.* Goel said to her that he was so called because his father wanted him to carry the memory of the family burned in Europe. And

*In Hebrew, Goel means redeemer and Zichron means memory.

wherever he went, he would redeem the memory of the dead. If she wanted to amuse herself a little, she could recite his name over and over again until its meaning became clear to her. Ayalla whispered his name and then again and then still again. And after that, her sadness melted away and she gave him a little smile and said, it's really true, it's like a prayer for the memory of the fallen.

When Goel, stunned by the sudden whirlwind, approached the cemetery, he saw her a ways off stooping among the gravestones. In his ears, the sickening sound of the shrieking kingfisher still roared, mixed with the short thunderous bursts of twenty-millimeter cannon. He heard her humming to herself some little tune in the way that people hum to themselves while toiling on some project that demands full concentration, and suddenly it seemed to him that he was mistaken, and the melody floating in his ears was nothing other than a refrain of the singing of the birds he had heard beneath the trees on the avenue. Since that short battle below Ufana, something had been wrong with his ears and he feared that his hearing was impaired and his eardrum injured. But when he drew a little nearer, he clearly made out her voice and was able to follow the melody, and some fragments of lyrics even carried to him in the mild breeze.

He did not want Ayalla to notice him and hid behind a thick hedge of arbor vitae bushes. And then he saw her moving among the graves, righting toppled flowerpots, straightening ragged bushes and gathering dry leaves. From time to time, she would stop before a marker and stretch out a small hand to wipe away the gray spider webs that marred the whiteness of the stone. After that, she would brush off the dust from the letters engraved on the face and pour water into the large vases leaning against the stones. All the while, she hummed to herself and took no notice of Goel observing her from behind the hedge of bushes. Then she walked to the gravestone of Yeky Margolin and stood beside it. The song she had hummed to herself grew louder and Goel had to come nearer because he could not see exactly what she was doing.

She did not know that he was close by, never imagined that anyone could be near. She worked in utter freedom and moved with the sprightliness of a dancer. She took a slender branch and crushed it between her fingers, then drew a glistening white rose from a jar and placed it on the grave. And from the grave she picked up two red roses, raised them to her nose, inhaled their scent, and examined their freshness. One of them had already begun to wilt and Ayalla transferred it to the discard pile. But the second she returned to the water. Goel remembered that she carried red and white roses almost daily on her walk to Yeky's grave. One time, he had asked to help her and to hold the jar for a bit, but she clearly preferred to do these things alone. Goel gave in and did not walk behind her and did not see her ritual at the grave.

When she bent over the roses, he saw her body exposed for a moment within the folds of her skimpy dress and felt a rush of desire for her. He closed his eyelids and the image of her naked body assailed his eyes. He remembered the nights at the beginning of their forbidden love, the moaning of her body in his embrace; he remembered the good smells that escaped when they made love. So small was she standing there before him among the graves, and so desirable she suddenly was, that a piercing ache in his loins assaulted him. The prison of bushes weighed down on him, and he wanted to go to her and embrace her and raise her in his arms, and to divorce her from the grave and the little ritual that she performed there. But her singing restrained him in the bushes, and he did not move from his spot and only gazed upon her with hopeless longing. She came here almost every day, crushing tender branches and replacing white roses with red ones. And in truth, he had a number of questions she would need to answer. If she behaved well, then he too could tell her of the three strange signs that had appeared to him that day on his way to the cemetery, and together they would be able to search and find still other signs. If only they had been wise enough they could have known years before that it was not with Yeky Margolin that Ayalla needed to enter the *chupah,* but with none other than Goel Zichrony, her good friend, who had remained unmarried even until his thirty-first year. As if from on high, he had been stopped so that he would await that evil hour, below the Syrian pillboxes at Ufana. Just for an instant the thought crossed Goel's mind, what would Ayalla have said to him if he had not been there, beside the overturned armored car, beside Yeky Margolin and the young soldier who had been killed with him? □

FICTION

Kaddish by the Sea

Deborah Shouse

The Rabbi calls you collect from Miami Beach. Your Grandmother Bibble has died and you are the only member of the family with a listed phone number.

"Chloe, is it?" he asks, as if disbelieving the granddaughter of a Jewish woman bears such a name. You could tell him it was inspired by your mother's dream after reading Edgar Cayce. You could say the name sounded to your father like a train splitting the Nebraska prairies. You could reveal your lover Arthur believes the name suits your terse blondness and insightful wit. But the news of Bibble's death makes you feel like a newspaper thumped hard on an empty porch. You are silent.

"Services tomorrow at three," the Rabbi says, his voice a brusque upper New York. You want to protest, to cry out with a mournful sound. Instead, you tear off a fingernail, and say, "I'll be there."

You hang up the phone and pick up your cold cup of peppermint tea. If Arthur were here, he would hold you tight against his crisp white shirt. He would murmur, "Everything's going to be all right," and smooth your hair.

You spill your tea reaching for a tissue. An umbrella pierces your foot when you fumble in the closet for a suitcase. You open the suitcase on your unmade bed and remember that tomorrow you were going to spend the whole night in Arthur's arms. Tomorrow, Arthur's wife, three children, and dogs are leaving town. All week you have imagined Arthur's leg heavy over yours in the night, his hand curled under his chin, his mouth slack in dreams.

Arthur fades as you pack the purple sequined sweatshirt Bibble sent you for Chanukah. You think about Bibble's raucous laugh and champagne-colored hair, which your mother Madelyn called "Impossible." You think of the year Madelyn flew to Scotland, and shipped you to Bibble in Miami. Friday nights, you sat in dark clothes on the woman's side of the shul. Saturdays you kept quiet in Bibble's unlit living room while ladies clacked teacups and gossiped. You remember coming home from school and checking the lemon tree by the front stoop. You remember Bibble staring off toward China as you romped in the ocean. Bibble's hair frothed around her head, like fancy wrapping. Her legs stood strong and smooth as yours are now.

When you think of Bibble, you see sandpipers on a deserted beach. Running, reaching, further, and then further. Death has nothing to do with your grandmother.

You scrape a spot off your black suit and wonder if Bibble was ready to die.

Last Purim, on your yearly visit, you rented beach chairs so Bibble could see the ocean. One was a sturdy chair, for Bibble's back, the other a striped sling. You arranged the chairs on the beach and prayed no one would steal them while you helped Bibble shuffle across the parking lot. The shifty sand jumped into her thick stockings and scratched at her ankles. You held her cane while she settled. Then you got the special thermos of martinis, made extra-dry, the plastic champagne glasses, and the sack of spicy barbeque potato chips. All the things Bibble thought made a perfect picnic.

"I've always wanted to celebrate Purim like this," Bibble said. "I've had enough of hamantaschen, but you know what the Rabbi would say."

You closed your eyes, heard the soothing heal of salt waters, and listened as Bibble told of her battles with the Rabbi.

"He's a rebel caught in an old man's tradition," she explained. "I tell him, when I die, I want my ashes to dance across this ocean. I am profaning the Lord, he warns, and pops a piece of gum into his mouth. Can you believe, talking God and chewing Juicy Fruit?"

Was she preparing for death, you wonder, as you stumble over a tennis shoe and answer the phone. You can tell by Arthur's voice he is in the bedroom of his father-in-law's house.

"Oh God, I'm sorry," Arthur says. His voice is low, like a prisoner making an illegal call.

"You can't go a day late, can you?" he asks. You know he is lying on his in-law's white bedspread, plucking balls of thread. You know he has excused himself from a game of Hearts to call a client. "I don't know when we'll have another chance like tomorrow night," he says.

You remind him your mother is somewhere in the Peruvian Andes, charting the course of UFOs.

"What about your father?" Arthur speaks as if he is plucking coffee grounds out of the garbage.

Deborah Shouse lives and writes in Kansas. Her work has appeared in publications such as New Letters, Good Housekeeping, Entrepreneur, *and* Jewish Life.

Your father, Franklin, drives the back roads of Nebraska, peddling King James.

"He didn't love Bibble," you almost shout, angry that Arthur can't sense your sorrow. Soon Arthur will sit down with his family and eat the roast beef dinner his father-in-law's third wife prepared.

"Come with me," you suddenly urge.

"I'll try." Quietly so no one except possibly you can hear, Arthur murmurs, "Iloveyou," slurred like melted heartbeats, and he is gone.

Madelyn taught you about men who leave.

"A man who's unattached expects too much," Madelyn had explained years ago, as she packed for her trip to the Esalen Institute. She was going to discover inner harmony with your biology teacher, Roger, a man attached to a thick wife and seven children.

"You've got to protect yourself from demands," Madelyn advised, motioning you to carry her luggage to the car. While Madelyn drove to California, Franklin traveled his territory, drifting from scripture to scripture. You dreamed your way through high school, a motherless child, and called Bibble every night. She always answered on the first ring.

"I miss you, darling," she'd say.

"I don't know when I'll be able to see you," you told her. You didn't want anyone expecting too much from you.



Arthur is not at the airport the next morning. You walk backwards as you board the plane, hoping to see him. But you only see impatient faces wearing business suits. You move too slowly, the faces tell you. They want to hurry to their seats, plug in headphones, open briefcases.

You are the only mourner on the plane. You would like to tell someone about Bibble's death, you would like someone to say, "I know you feel the loss."

So far, all you feel is the harsh hustle, the bright blare of tourists carrying red netted sacks of oranges through the Miami airport.

Your purse spills as you stand in the rental car line. You'd like to sit on the dirty floor beside the crumpled Kleenex, cheap pens, idle pennies, until someone arrives to help you. Madelyn should be here, you tell yourself, although your mother never got along with Bibble. Franklin would hold forth his New Testament and proclaim Bibble a heretic.

As you drive toward Bibble's, you wonder what Arthur is doing. His life seems as far away from you as Bibble's death. You imagine Arthur living on a planet where you cannot breathe, where the life-forms are alien creatures with their own language. Why do you love such a man? you ask yourself, parking in front of Bibble's house. He expects so little—you hope for so much.

"You don't like yourself much, do you?" Bibble had said, brushing the sand from her legs. "Otherwise you would not hook up with a married man."

You had stared at a child trying to climb on a float against the waves.

"I was like that once." Bibble handed her empty glass to you, and struggled to stand. "Then Madelyn called and said she was dumping you in a boarding school while she ran off to Findhorn. I knew you needed to be with me. That year with you saved me."

You tasted the salt spray on your lips. You never knew you were the atonement for Bibble's sins. You never imagined who she gave up for you. Is that where she learned about martinis, you wanted to ask. But her face closed, as though a wind blew all the feelings out to sea.

"This is where I want to be buried," she said, as you helped her toward the car. "Say a Kaddish for me, will you darling?"

You don't know the prayer for the dead, you think, as you walk up the weedy sidewalk to Bibble's house. An old lady opens the door. She hugs you, and pinches your cheeks for health. Like you were nine. You expect Bibble to be sitting in the rocker, amazed you believed her joke.

A wizened man mourns in Bibble's rocking chair. Brittle women take turns comforting you. They remember you from when you were this high.

"You haven't changed, Bubeleh," one of them whispers. But of course, you have changed. You are sadder, and you settle for less.

Two men, white-jowled faces and sunk black clothes, sit on metal chairs in the corner of the room. One cries into a handkerchief. The other stares at you as if you should know him. Is he the one Bibble gave up for you, you wonder.

Here among Bibble's last friends, the clacking of coffee cups, soothing chant of old voices, you feel your loss.

The funeral is short, packed with Psalms. You can't believe Bibble is inside the plain wooden coffin. You know she runs somewhere on a laughing beach.

"She wanted to be cremated," you tell the Rabbi when the service ends.

"It was an old argument between us," he says. "An intellectual game." He holds the gray hairs that straggle from the end of his beard. Underneath a thick moustache, his lip quivers.

"She wanted to be scattered across the ocean," you say. When he turns away, you tug on his solemn black coat like an ignored child.

An old lady rattles up and puts her arm around you.

"It's against God's law," she whispers, and leads you out of the room.

You return to Bibble's. People bring apple cakes, briskets, strudels, kugel. Bibble would have loved such a party, but to you it's a series of thank-you notes to a series of strangers.

Every face blurs. You recognize only the Rabbi, as he hovers at the table, selecting a slice of kugel, a strong cup of tea.

"She wanted to be cremated," you repeat. You stand tall before him, like an avenging angel.

"You don't understand," the Rabbi says wearily, stirring the sugar into his tea with a thick finger. "It was a joke, like dyeing her hair. Inside, she wanted what God wanted."

Women clutter around, clearing you away from the holy man. You're not sure what you should do. Madelyn would close her eyes and check the vibrations from her quartz crystal. Franklin would clutch his golden cross and raise a warning finger against hell.

"You must be exhausted," an older lady worries. She seats you on the sofa and hands you a cup of tea. Your bones limp with sadness, your heart beats in an empty cave. You wonder what Bibble expected of you.

You rush to the Rabbi as he moves toward the door.

"She wanted to be scattered across the ocean." You speak loud and hard, as though you were convincing a stubborn hard-of-hearing uncle.

"I don't want her cremated. I don't want to lose her that way," he says. He lowers his head, as if the words don't belong to him. A crumb of cake dances across his moustache.

You imagine Bibble burned to a pile of meager soot. You imagine pouring her ashes into a champagne glass and the wind stealing her from you.

"I don't even know how to pray for her," you want to tell the Rabbi. But it is too late. He has walked off to deal with other sorrows.

The sunken old man is the last to leave. He kisses the mezuza on the doorframe and disappears into the night.

Alone, you realize you can call Arthur's house without worrying about his wife. As you dial, you picture Arthur, stretched out on his sofa, reading. His shirt is open at the neck, his silk tie draped across his loafers. He balances the telephone on his stomach, waiting for your call. You imagine him answering the phone instantly, his voice pleased and breathless.

Instead, you hear only endless ringing. As usual, you expected too much.

"I won't leave you," Bibble had said years ago, when Madelyn sent you to Miami. You followed Bibble like a sticky shadow, refusing friends, school. Bibble was your last chance.

"Go outside and play, and I'll be here waiting for you," Bibble commanded, putting the last hairpin in her French twist.

You went down the sidewalk, examined the lemon tree, ran to the corner and back, bursting into the house. Knowing it would be empty. And she was there, exactly as you left her.

Exactly as then, the black-and-white television gets only the Spanish channel. The sound treats you like warm milk. You fall asleep in the rocker, clutching Bibble's crocheted pink pillow.

In the morning you dress in black and drink two cups of coffee before you remember the Kaddish. You dial the temple and the Rabbi answers.

"I promised I'd say Kaddish," you tell him. "I want to do it by the ocean."

You are surprised when he offers to meet you.

"I know a good beach," he says. He gives you directions in a voice sad as oatmeal.

You write his instructions on a napkin, then forget and wipe your mouth. Your lipstick blurs the address, and you spend an hour lost in dead-end streets.

You barely recognize the Rabbi, leaning against a splotched red Volkswagen with a spray-painted peace symbol on its back. He wears sagging jeans and a battered University of Miami sweatshirt. You follow him, and walk a long time before finding a stretch of beach not

littered with people, pop cans, and bulbous seaweed.

You feel Bibble laughing at you in your black boardroom suit and the Rabbi in the clothes of a sixties poet.

"Yisgadal," he intones, and you repeat the heavy Hebrew words. Two teenage girls shouldering radios drift past you, splattering rock music against your prayer. The wind slaps your hair into your face, the spray claims your legs. When the prayer has ended, when the music has faded down the beach, you feel alone, scared, unattached. You expected Bibble to live through your life with you.

You expected Arthur to cast off his family and move to your life. You expected Madelyn to return from California, lonely to see you. Yet you are alone. Madelyn, Franklin, and Arthur are empty shells on the cluttered beach.

Tears drip down your face and you taste their sweet salt.

The Rabbi stands lighthouse-still, staring toward China.

"Let's go," he says, wiping his cheeks with the sleeve of his sweatshirt. You see the redness in his eyes and the tears, like fleeting moments, caught in his beard.

Was he the one she gave up for you, you wonder, as you follow him.

Bibble would mock you for moving so slowly. You wonder what the Rabbi thinks as you take off your shoes and run ahead, racing against the sand and the tide, running fast as Bibble would have, leaping ahead just to catch up with her. □

The Night Fireman

L. S. Asekoff

Sometimes looking up from the page
He finds it difficult not to believe
This is the final joke life has played;
Like a man shoveling sparks in an iron field
He waits for the wire that darkly sings,
    "Brother,
We are celebrating skin cancer in Salem;
    please bring
Uranium roses home from the sun."
That other world where it is written
In the Book of Days the lost bride returns
Wound in her veil of prodigal flame
& all those who praise the kingdom of the mad
& the kingdom of God shall be one.

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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

David Biale responds:

If the Ruethers had proposed no more in their book than they do in their letter, I would never have written the review that I did. I too believe that Israel must find ways to become a more pluralistic and inclusive democracy. I too believe that Israel must recognize the national aspirations of the Palestinians and participate in the creation of a two-state solution. But my criticism of Israel derives from a profound identification with the historical necessity of Zionism as a movement of national Jewish liberation.

Unfortunately, the Ruethers' book betrays no such sympathy. While they may be willing to accept some form of sovereignty by Jews in the Middle East as an irreversible fact, they neither understand nor support the creation of that sovereignty in the first place. For the Ruethers, Zionism was tainted from the outset. Zionism *by definition* is ethnocentric and therefore had to expel the Palestinians. The Ruethers write: "Zionist ideology, both religious and secular, has had a strong element of this vengeance-seeking relation to the Western and Arab worlds. Gaining the lands for the Jews has been seen as a righteous ousting of Palestinians as inferior and evil." No wonder the Ruethers must believe, against all the historical evidence, in a prior plan to expel the Palestinians in 1948. The messy truth—that the expulsion/flight was a result of a war situation for which *both* sides bear responsibility—would undermine their demonic definition of Zionism.

The Ruethers reduce Zionism to a caricature by focusing on its most chauvinist, orthodox exponents. They hold that Zionism can only be justified "on the religious myth of the Promised Land. This myth depends for its credibility on the acceptance of a tribalist and exclusive concept of God." Even the secular, liberal forces which have dominated Zionism for much of its history are necessarily under the sway of these messianic ideas!

As a reversion "back to an ethnocentric view of God as one who elects only one people and is concerned with only one territory," Zionism is a betrayal of rabbinic Judaism which is based on "a more universalist concept of God," the same concept as can be found in Christianity and Islam (this anti-nationalist view of rabbinic Judaism is essentially the same as the one Rosemary Ruether articulates in *Faith and Fratricide*). In their paraphrase of the Arab Christian theologians, whose position they uncritically adopt, "Jews are seen as having transcended their earlier national form of existence and become a universal people with a distinct vocation to witness to the universal God, paralleling the Christian witness to Jesus Christ. The Promised Land ... is not a national territory but the Kingdom of Heaven, trans-historical human destiny in the world to come." Against their belated protestations, what the Ruethers really believe is that the Jews are not a nation, but rather a religion, and that their desire for a nation-state is somehow illegitimate.

We can debate the theological merits of such arguments, but they are singularly perverse as the basis for a political accommodation between Jews and Palestinians. If Jewish nationalism was illegitimate at the outset, why should Palestinians make peace with it? Indeed, the Ruethers find little reason other than Realpolitik to reject the infamous PLO Charter which describes Zionism as "racist and fanatic."

None of this negates the very real injustices done to the Palestinians or apologizes for the outrages of current Israeli policy. But if the Ruethers hope to contribute to a solution, they will have to get beyond their naive and irenic view of Palestinian nationalism and subject it to as much criticism as they do Zionism. And if they want to find a receptive Jewish audience, they will have to come up with a much more plausible account for Zionism and its origins.

I consider myself a reader receptive to criticism of Israeli policy and not hostile to a Christian engaging in such criticism. I certainly do not look for anti-Semites under every bed! But to tell that vast majority of the Jewish people which considers itself Zionist that they have betrayed the essence of Judaism seems to me a species of Christian imperialism that borders on anti-Semitism. That even a reader such as myself found the Ruethers' book historically prejudiced and theologically offensive should be an indication that they have failed to fulfill the noble ideals articulated in their present letter.

CROSSING THE STREET IN CHILE

(Continued from p. 17)

for those fundamental changes. But this choice also means that the next government is, as it plans ahead, simultaneously undermining its own future power base. When the ultra-Right regroups and leads yet another assault on democracy, how many poor, excluded Chileans, told that democracy would solve all their problems, will march into the streets and defend leaders—and a system—that did little to alleviate their suffering?

These may be essential long-term dilemmas, but my friends in Chile have been reluctant of late to discuss them with me. Who can blame them? After so many years of struggle, militants—no matter how jubilant—are wary of over-accelerating, willing to compromise for a bit of peace, desperate for a night when they will not fear a car braking in front of their door, anxious for a morning when they will not have to hide their thoughts from their boss or their neighbors or even their children. Dare I say that they, that we, have learned our lesson? Dare I add my suspicion that this is why, ultimately, Pinochet can be neutralized—because he has already accomplished his goal of pacifying and domesticating the unruly country and its dreams of a total transformation?

The Chilean method of easing a dictator out of office gradually, relentlessly, without recourse to armed violence, has several advantages. It both avoids the ravages of an overt civil war and strengthens the civilian world through a vast network of participatory instances and institutions. There has also been time for the antagonists of a fractured society to hammer out their differences and explore flexible, reasonable solutions. But the jaywalking strategy poses one overriding problem: it inevitably leaves the military in control. It is supposed that, if push comes to shove (and hungry, hurt people will inevitably, as the recent riots in Venezuela and Argentina show, begin to shove), the military will answer with violence and, I believe, will veto any attempt at deep change.

The military. Most of the endless conversations that Chileans so love meander on until they inevitably end up with the same question: Finally, what is it that the military will do? (Like other people, what we Chileans cannot correct in reality we correct through language.)

I may know something about Chilean streets, but let me confess right away that I haven't an inkling—like most of my compatriots—about what makes our glorious army tick. In democratic times, when I might have approached any number of soldiers without trepidation, I was decidedly indifferent to them. I even turned down, toward the end of the Allende presidency, an offer to do a fiction workshop with some officers. How was I to know that those men, whose literary talents were irrelevant to me, would spend the rest of this century determining my fate—and the fate of my literature? A few months later I was asking myself compulsively what so many Chileans have been asking themselves since the coup: How is it that these soldiers, purportedly the most democratic in Latin America, could have turned into torturers? Moreover, how can we reach them, how can we draw them into a dialogue in which, rather than our receiving their bullets, they would receive our words?

All but one of my encounters with the Chilean military have been violent. There were the blackened faces of the soldiers I saw patrolling Santiago's streets on so many of my visits—anonymous faces that struck fear into the population. There was the young recruit who shouted at me that I should not come near as I limped toward him one night after having been beaten up, along with a group of protesters, by troops. He had his finger on the trigger of his submachine gun, but I knew that he was the frightened one, that some superior had drummed into him that I was the enemy. "Keep two meters away from me," he screamed again, his hand trembling, his eyes feverish, as if the mere possibility of my talking to him or touching him threatened his psychic stability. Then there were the troops that guarded the airport the day I was arrested and then deported from Chile: they would not even acknowledge a question I put to them.

Over and over it has been impossible to get near enough even to hope for a normal exchange of views.

Except once.

And that occasion, of course, entailed streets, cars, and a pedestrian.

On that hot February day a few years ago, it was I who was driving my car down an avenue in a well-to-do Santiago neighborhood. The pedestrian was a destitute old woman who happened to be crossing my path with a small boy in tow. Suddenly she collapsed—almost in front of my advancing car. As I am not Pinochet, I swerved the vehicle, brought it to a stop a few yards down the street, and rushed back. Another automobile was idling, its motor on, right next to the woman's body. A wiry, wispy-haired lady with glasses and a pointed nose was sitting behind the wheel, showing not even the slightest inclination to get out of her car. The boy had just answered a question she had asked. She turned her glasses in my direction.

"It's nothing," she informed me. "Look. She's breathing. This child says it's just fatigue."

I suggested that we should call an ambulance, and then I began looking around for a phone. The lady shook

her head. "Let the military take care of it," she said.

At first I thought it was some sort of sick joke, until I noticed a camouflaged army pickup truck descending the avenue in our direction. It braked next to the still-unconscious woman and an officer in battle dress jumped out. I couldn't guess his rank, but he was rather young, with an extremely pleasant, open face, a trimmed but soft mustache, and sparkling dark eyes. Two soldiers were in back crouching behind a machine gun as if expecting an ambush, but the officer seemed quite at ease and spoke softly to them. Then he stooped down next to the woman and took her pulse. Her eyes fluttered open. "It's just fatigue, *mi teniente,*" she said, addressing him with the familiarity of the possessive *mi*—my lieutenant. He would take care of her; he was hers. It turned out she had been walking since six that morning: her shantytown was some eight miles away, in the poorest suburb of the city. Her energy had simply given out. Now she needed some money to get home.

I helped the officer carry her to the sidewalk. She had stagnated in that indefinite agelessness of poverty, where what we perceive and measure is the suffering rather than the years. She had just one tooth in her mouth and it was ugly and gray. But like so many Chileans who have survived Pinochet's economic miracle, she possessed a dignity that was poignant, a sense of shame at seeing herself so helpless and exposed. This was not the way life was supposed to have been. Streets were not for fainting or begging, but for crossing with fearless pride.

"I'm asking because I'm in need, sir," she said to me, quickly assessing that I might be the one who could help her out. "I don't like to ask, but there's no work. We're ten at home."

I offered her some coins and pointed at a small bag she was still clutching. Some old crusts of bread had spilled out. "Just be sure," I admonished her, "to eat something or you'll faint again." As soon as the words came out I felt the bite of paternalism in them. She was older than I was and yet I could act as a father, a protective figure, and tell her what to do, merely because I happened to be lucky enough not to have collapsed from hunger in the middle of a street.

Her answer taught me that she, like most poor people, was in no need of advice from the well-to-do.

"I've already eaten bread. We eat so much bread that we get hiccups, sir. And then people won't give us a thing because they think we're drunk."

Meanwhile, the lady in the car had not moved, drinking in the scene with faint curiosity. Only when we packed the woman and the child aboard a bus, when the excitement was over, did the lady driver depart. If I mention her distant presence at all, it is because it elucidates, I believe, what followed. Chile is full of people like her—people unwilling to register the horror right before their eyes because to do so would force them to act. In a Pinochet-style dictatorship, such action can be perilous. Fear corrupts the morality of a nation because it makes everyone an accomplice. This collective apathy is the exact opposite, perhaps the secret Siamese twin, of the enthusiastic dissidents who have put their lives on the line all these years for freedom. In Chile, you either stand back or you care. And then you pay the consequences.

That lady's indifference, her accepting that nothing could be done to help the less fortunate, nurtured in me the dangerous illusion that the officer and I were part of a magic circle, set apart from the degradation of everyday Chile. Both of us tried to alleviate the suffering of another human being—while someone in a car comfortably looked on. This feeling that somehow we were not like that lady, that we were partners for a few minutes, may explain the absolutely irrational, stupid way in which I acted, for there was nothing heroic in my stepping up to the officer—who was already at the wheel of his vehicle, getting ready to leave—and asking:

"*Hasta cuándo?* Until when do you think we can tolerate this sort of situation?" He could have had me arrested on the spot, but there was no hostility in his look. A gleam of insecurity glazed his eyes, then vanished. Perhaps he still shared with me that island outside time we had inhabited together for a short while, as if we did not live in a country which allowed us only mistrust and hatred. "Do you think our people deserve to suffer in this way? To suffer like this woman? Do you think we can go on and on like this forever? Without you people doing anything about it?"

He did not react immediately. Then he said: "That's why I stopped." We looked at each other for a few seconds. He didn't avoid my eyes. "That's all I can do," he added, and gently pressed his foot to the accelerator. The truck disappeared around a corner.

What will that man and his colleagues do as Chile moves toward democracy and the inevitable disorder that democratic adjustments and real participation will mean? I could not imagine him then, and I cannot imagine him now, painting his face with the dark colors of the warrior and going out to suppress the dissidents because they publicly object to the fact that so many Chileans cannot cross the street without fainting from hunger; and yet I do not doubt that he had followed orders then and will follow orders tomorrow. What else had that officer been ordered to do in the past, in spite of his sparkling eyes and engaging smile? Did he raid shantytowns, shoot at priests, burn the drawings of children in cultural centers? Did he torture? Will I see his photograph someday in a newspaper and learn that he had murdered one of my friends?

And yet, I cannot help asking myself—now that history is making it possible for the civilians and the military to meet—if there is a chance that the brief interlude during which he and I managed to establish a different sort of link may be a pale anticipation of how things will soon be in Chile. Can we get the military to look us in the eyes and accept that the country itself is in danger of dying of hunger and immorality—that the enemy is not the woman who has hiccups from eating nothing but bread, and certainly not those who want to end the injustice?

Or is this impossible? Is this hope that we will be able to resolve our dilemmas peacefully and harmoniously just one more illusion of a people who continue to cross the streets as they did decades ago, before Pinochet became part of our vocabulary and our heritage? Are we really special and different? We will know soon enough. We will know not only what the military decided to do, but how the millions of jaywalking Chileans found—or did not find—a way to speak to the troops, a way to get them off their trucks and into the streets that belong to all of us. □

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DIVINE CONVERSATIONS

(Continued from p. 20)

at the Red Sea. This is the God the people stood before at Sinai, coming to their identity as a people, responding with the myriad laws, institutions, and customs that gave form and substance to their communal life. This is the God of the covenant, a reciprocal compact which the people entered willingly, a compact which bound God and people through good times and bad. This is the God who is friend, holy terror, and persistent goad.

On Sexuality

For liberal Jews who take their Judaism seriously, there is no area in which modern practice and traditional values are further apart than that of sexuality. Traditional Judaism insists that legitimate sexual expression be limited to marriage, and indeed only to certain periods of a marriage. Traditional Judaism insists upon approaching sexuality by the means of boundaries and control. These strictures are thoroughly out of tune with both the modern temper and the lived decisions of most contemporary Jews. Troublesome as inherited sexual values are for Jews of both sexes, however, they are especially troubling for women, for these values are central to Judaism's patriarchal system. The stigma and burden of sexuality fall differently on women than on men. Traditional Judaism posits men's sexual impulses as powerful—"evil"—inclinations in need of firm control. But women's very bodily functions are devalued and made the center of a complex of taboos: women's gait, their voices, and their natural beauty are all regarded as snares or temptations and are subjected to elaborate precautions. Because as women we are the focus of ambivalence about sexuality in Judaism, we are enormously important to the transformation of Jewish attitudes toward sexuality. In naming and reclaiming their own sexuality, women challenge the patriarchal order which is based on the control of women's sexuality.

In the voluminous feminist scholarship on sexuality, only a minority strand tries to bring together sexuality and the sacred. This strand, however, has considerable power not only to challenge traditional dualisms but also to generate alternatives to the energy/control paradigm of sexuality, which assumes that sexuality is an alien energy that takes control over the self. A number of feminists concerned with the connections between sexuality and spirit have suggested a new model that sees sexuality as part of a continuum of embodied self-expression. As ethicist Beverly Harrison argues in setting out a feminist moral theology, our whole relationship to the world is body mediated. "All knowledge is rooted in our sensuality. We know and value the world, *if* we know and value it, through our ability to touch, to hear, to see." Sexuality is one dimension of our body-mediated power, of the body space that is "literally the ground of our personhood."

This understanding of sexuality as one dimension of bodily feeling finds its most powerful formulation in Audre Lorde's brilliant essay, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." Lorde defines sexuality as one expression of a spectrum of erotic energy that ideally suffuses all the activities in our lives. The erotic is the life-force, the capacity for feeling, the capacity for joy, a power we are taught to fear and ignore by a society that "defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human

need." The erotic can be experienced with another in the sharing of sexual passion, though eroticism is not limited to sex. It is also present in deep connection through any pursuit, "physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual." Indeed, broadly speaking, the erotic is the joy that, every now and then, human beings find themselves capable of experiencing. As such, it is a source of empowerment, because once we experience joy, the experience becomes a "lens through which we [can] scrutinize all aspects of our existence." When we turn away from the knowledge the erotic gives us, when we accept powerlessness or resignation, we cheat ourselves of a full life. And when we fail to understand sexual feelings as an expression of the power of the erotic, we reduce them to mere sensations that we then fear and seek to suppress.

This view of sexuality as part of a spectrum of body and life energy rather than as a special force or as an evil inclination has at least two important implications for understanding the place of sexuality in human life. One is that we cannot suppress our capacity for sexual feeling without suppressing our capacity for feeling more generally. If sexuality is one dimension of our ability to live passionately in the world, then in cutting off our sexual feelings we diminish our overall power to feel, know, and value deeply. Acknowledging our sexuality does not imply that we must act out our sexual feelings to any greater extent than we are compelled to act out any feelings. It does mean, however, that we must honor and make room for feelings (including sexual feelings)—as Harrison describes, "the basic ingredient in our relational transaction with the world."

Second, insofar as sexuality is an element in the embodiment that mediates our relation to reality, an aspect of the life energy that enables us to connect with others creatively and with joy, sexuality is profoundly connected to spirituality; indeed, sexuality is inseparable from it.

Acceptance and avowal of a link between sex and spirit is by no means foreign to Jewish experience. In the mysteries of the marriage bed on Sabbath night, in the sanctity of the Song of Songs, in the very nature and dynamics of the Godhead, sexual expression is an image of and a path to the holy. Yet again and again in theology and practice, Judaism undermines this acknowledged connection by defining sexuality in terms of patriarchal possession and control. When a woman's sexuality is seen as an object to be possessed, and sexuality itself is perceived as an impulse that can take possession of the self, the central issues surrounding sexuality will necessarily be issues of control: Who has the right to control a particular woman's sexuality in what situation? How can a man control his own sexual impulses, given the constant bombardment of female temptation? How can the law control women and the relations between men and women so that the danger of illicit sexual relations (relations with a woman whose sexuality is owned by some other man) is minimized? All these questions make perfect sense in a patriarchal system, but they are inimical to the mutuality, openness, and vulnerability in sexual relations that tie sexuality to the sacred. How then can we develop a model of sexuality that is freed from the patriarchal framework? How can we think about sexuality in a way that springs from and honors the experience of women? How can we develop a positive feminist discourse about sexuality in a Jewish context?

A Jewish feminist understanding of sexuality begins with the insistence that what goes on in the bedroom can never be isolated from the wider cultural context of which the bedroom is a part. The inequalities of the family are mirrored in the inequalities of society and prepare people to accept larger social inequalities. Thus a Jewish feminist approach to sexuality must take sexual mutuality as a task for the whole of life and not just for Friday evening.

A central task of the feminist reconstruction of Jewish attitudes toward sexuality is the radical transformation of the institutional, legal framework within which sexual relations are supposed to take place. Insofar as Judaism maintains its interest in the establishment of enduring relationships both as a source of adult companionship and development and as a context for raising and educating children, these relationships should be entered into and dissolved by mutual initiative and consent. "Marriage" should not be about the transfer of women or the sanctification of potential disorder through the firm establishment of women in the patriarchal family, but the decision of two adults—any two adults—to make their lives together, lives that include the sharing of sexuality.

This redefinition of the legal framework of marriage, which accords with the feminist refusal to sanctify any hierarchical relationship, is also based on the important principle that sexuality is not something we can acquire or possess in another. We are each the possessor of our own sexuality—in Adrienne Rich's phrase, the "presiding genius" of our own bodies. The sharing of sexuality with another is something that should happen only by mutual consent, a consent that is not a blanket permission but rather one that is continually renewed in the actual rhythms of particular relationships. This principle, simple as it seems, challenges both the fundamental assumptions of Jewish marriage law and the Jewish understanding of what women's sexuality is "about." It also defines as immoral all legal regulations that promote the possession, control, and exchange of women's sexuality. Such an ethic disputes the assertion that a woman's sexuality is

her contribution to the family rather than the expression of her own embodiment.

But if one firm principle of feminist thinking about sexuality is that no one can possess the sexuality of another, another principle is that sexuality is not something that pertains only or primarily to the self. Indeed, our sexuality is fundamentally about moving out beyond ourselves. Our sexuality helps us communicate with others, not just in sexual encounters, narrowly defined, but in all real relationships in our lives. We live in the world as sexual beings. As Audre Lorde argues, our sexuality is a current that flows through all activities that are important to us. True intellectual exchange, common work, and shared experience are all laced with sexual energy that animates and enlivens them. The bonds of community are erotic bonds.

The erotic nature of community is by no means lost on Judaism; indeed, it is the subject of profound ambivalence in both the midrash and law. If the energy of community is erotic, there are no guarantees that eroticism will stay within prescribed legal boundaries, as opposed to breaking out and disrupting communal sanctity. If we allow ourselves to perceive and acknowledge sexual feelings, there is always the danger we may act on them, and these feelings may not correspond to group consensus about whom we may desire and when.

When the erotic is understood not simply as sexual feeling in the narrow sense but as our fundamental life energy, the owning of this power in our lives becomes even more threatening to established structures. Having experienced the power and legitimacy of our own sexual desire, we are less likely to subscribe to a system that prescribes and proscribes the channels of that desire. Having glimpsed the possibility of genuine satisfaction in work well done, we are less likely to settle for work that is alienating and meaningless. Having experienced our capacity for creative and joyful action, we are less likely to accept hierarchical power relationships that deny or restrict our ability to bring that creativity and joy to more and more aspects of our lives.

It may be that our ability as women to live within the patriarchal family and the larger patriarchal structures that govern Jewish life depends on numbing ourselves to the sources of vision and power that fuel meaningful resistance. It may also be that our ability as Jews to live unobtrusively as a minority in a hostile culture has depended on our blocking sources of personal power that might lead to resistance that feels foolish or frightening. Obviously, then, from a patriarchal perspective—or the perspective of any hierarchical system—erotic empowerment is dangerous. That is why, in Lorde's words, "we are taught to separate the erotic demand from the most vital areas of our lives other than sex," and that is why we are also taught to restrain our sexuality, so that it too fits the parameters of hierarchical control that govern the rest of our lives. From a feminist perspective, however, the power and danger of the erotic are not reasons to fear and suppress it but rather to nurture it as a profound personal and communal resource in the struggle for change.

I am not arguing for free sex or for more sexual expression, quantitatively speaking. I am arguing for living dangerously, for choosing to take responsibility for working through the possible consequences of sexual feeling, rather than repressing both sexual feeling and feeling in general. I am arguing that our ability to transform Judaism and the world is rooted in our capacity to be alive to the pain and anger that is caused by relationships of domination, and the joy that awaits us on the other side. I am arguing that to be alive is to be sexually alive, and that in suppressing one source of vitality we suppress another.

The question is: Can we affirm our sexuality as a gift, making it sacred not by cordoning off pieces of it, but by increasing our awareness of the ways sexuality connects us to all things? Can we stop evicting sexuality from the synagogue, hiding it behind a *mekhitza,* and praying only with our heads? Can we bring sexuality back in, offer it to God as we experience the connection between the spiritual and the holy? Dare we trust our capacity for joy—knowing it is related to our sexuality—to point toward new ways of structuring communal life?

Rejection of the traditional energy/control model of sexuality, and of ownership as a category for understanding sexual exchange, is by no means synonymous with a sexual ethic of "anything goes." On the contrary, I would argue that over the last twenty years the obsession with sexuality in the U.S. has reversed traditional paradigms without moving beyond them. Over the past twenty years the American obsession with sexuality, the increasing pressure toward early sexual activity for women and men, and the expectation that sex could compensate for disappointments in every other area of life have all led to dissatisfaction that is now being acted out.

* * *

The unification of sexuality and spirituality is a sometime gift, a measure of the possible—rarely the reality of everyday experience. What keeps this unification alive as a recurring possibility is the exercise of respect, responsibility, and honesty—commensurate with the nature and depth of the particular relationship—as basic values in any sexual relationship. In terms of concrete life choices, I believe that radical mutuality is most fully possible in the context of an ongoing, com-

mitted relationship in which sexual expression is one dimension of a shared life. While we might reject the tradition that insists that sex be limited to a heterosexual marriage, this tradition finds its echo in support for long-term partnerships as the richest setting for living out the meanings of mutuality, responsibility, and honesty amid the distractions, problems, and pleasures of daily life. Such partnerships are not, however, an option for all adults who want them, and not all adults would choose them. To acknowledge, as feminists, the legitimacy of a variety of life decisions and, at the same time, to affirm the value of sexual well-being as an aspect of total well-being, we need to apply certain fundamental values to a range of sexual choices and styles. While honesty, responsibility, and respect are goods that pertain to any relationship, the concrete meaning of these values will vary considerably depending upon the duration and significance of the connection involved. In one sort of relationship, honesty may mean the complete and open sharing of feelings and experiences; in another, clarity about intent for a particular encounter. In the context of a committed partnership, responsibility may signify lifelong presence, trust, and exchange; in a brief encounter, discussion of birth control, AIDS, and safe sex. At its fullest, respect may mean regard for another as a total person; at a minimum, absence of pressure or coercion, and a commitment, in Lorde's terms, not to "look away" as we come together. If we need to look away, then we should walk away: the same choices about whether and how to act on our feelings that pertain to any area of moral decision making are open to us in relation to our sexuality.

The same norms that apply to heterosexual relationships also apply to gay and lesbian relationships. There are many issues that might be considered in reevaluating traditional Judaism's rejection of homosexuality, but the central issue in the context of a feminist reconceptualization of sexuality is the relationship between homosexual choice and the continuity between sexual energy and embodied life energy. If we understand sexuality as part of what enables us to reach out beyond ourselves, as a means of communication and thus as a fundamental ingredient in our spirituality, then the question of the morality of homosexuality is neither one of halakha nor of the right to privacy or freedom of choice. Instead, we need to affirm the value of an individual's ability to find that place within the self where sexuality and spirituality come together. It is possible that many people who are in homosexual relationships could choose to lead heterosexual lives for the sake of conformity to halakha or wider social pressures and values. But this choice would then violate the deeper vision offered by the Jewish tradition that sexuality can be a medium for the experience and reunification of God.

* * *

Sexuality, as an aspect of our life energy and power, connects us with God, the sustaining source of energy and power in the universe. When we reach out sexually, with our total selves, we may find that the boundaries between self and other dissolve, and we may feel ourselves united with larger currents of energy and sustenance. It is also the case, however, that even as we reach out to others in ordinary daily interactions, we reach toward the God who is present in connection, in the web of relation with a wider world. On the one hand, the wholeness, the "all-embracing quality of sexual expression" that includes body, mind, and feeling is the closest many people can come in this life to experiencing the embracing wholeness of God. On the other hand, the everyday bonds of community are also erotic bonds through which we touch the God of community, creating a place where the divine presence can rest. In recognizing the continuity between our own sexuality and the greater currents that nourish and renew it, we affirm our sexuality as a source of energy and power that, tempered by the values of respect and mutuality, can lead us to a God of relationship—a sexual God. □

THE BOUGH BREAKS

(Continued from p. 28)

Yes, I wonder, once in a while, whose life I have usurped.

In the streetcar going home, my father held my hand. He said, "So you will be going to England."

I said, "All by myself?" and I remember clearly the sensation, as if my insides had been suddenly scooped away. At the same time I felt that this "going to England" had a brave sound.

"Not all by yourself!" my father said. "There will be six hundred other children."

"When am I going?" I asked.

"Thursday," said my father. "The day after tomorrow."

Then I felt the icy chill just below my chest where my insides had been.

The assembly point was a huge empty lot behind the railway station in the outskirts of Vienna. I looked among the hundreds of children milling in the darkness. Someone came over to me and checked my papers and hung a cardboard label with the number 152 strung on a shoelace around my neck and tied the corresponding numbers to my rucksack. I have no clear recollection of my father's being there—perhaps his head was too high and out of the circle of lights. I do remember his greatcoat standing next to my mother's black pony fur, but every time I

looked toward them it was my mother's tiny face, crumpled and feverish inside her fox collar, that I saw smiling steadily toward me.

We were arranged in a long column four deep, according to numbers. The rucksack was strapped on my back. There was a confusion of kissing parents—my father bending down, my mother's face burning against mine ... the line set in motion.... Panic-stricken, I looked to the right, but my mother was there keeping at my side, and she was smiling so that it seemed a gay thing, like a joke we were having together. The children behind me said, "Go on, move!" We passed through the great doors. I looked to my right; my mother was nowhere to be seen.

One hundred of the six hundred children on our transport that December 10, 1938, got off the train in Holland where the German Occupation overtook them two years later. The rest of us crossed the Channel to England.

Inside the ship I had a neat cabin all to myself. I folded my dress and stockings with fanatical tidiness and brushed my teeth to appease my absent mother. I lay between white sheets in a narrow bed and prayed God to keep me from getting seasick and my parents from getting arrested. A big Negro steward came in with a steaming cup, which he placed in a metal ring attached to the bedside table. I searched in my mind quickly for something to say to keep him with me. I asked him if he thought I was going to get seasick. He said no, the thing was to lie down and go right to sleep and wake up on the other side of the Channel in the morning. And then he put the light out and said, "Remember now, you sleep now."

We were taken to a workers' summer camp at Dover Court on England's east coast that coldest winter in living memory. For days on end the snow drifted through the air inside the great glass and iron dining hall. They installed stoves. We sat around and waited for the English families who were to come and take us home with them. I wore my coat and mittens and executed my first intentional piece of "writing." It was a tear-jerking letter full of sunsets. I sent it to the address of a refugee committee that my father had given me; my letter moved them to procure the job, the sponsor, and the visa that brought my parents to England—proving that bad literature can make things happen.

One evening I was sitting by one of the stoves, writing a letter to my parents, when two English ladies came up to me. One of them carried a pad of paper, and she said, "How about this one?" and the other lady said, "All right." They smiled at me. They asked me if I was Orthodox. I said yes. They were pleased. They said then would I like to come live with a lovely Orthodox family in Liverpool. I said yes enthusiastically, and we all three beamed at one another. I asked the ladies if they would find a sponsor for my parents, and watched them exchange glances. One lady patted my head and said we would see. I said and could they get a sponsor for my grandparents and for my cousins Erica and Ilse, who had not been able to come on the children's transport like me. The ladies' smiles became strained. They said we would talk about it later.

I finished my letter to my parents, saying that I was going to go and live with this lovely Orthodox family in Liverpool and would they please write and tell me what did "Orthodox" mean.

Other People's Houses

I was one of twenty little girls who were brought north for distribution to Liverpool families. I kept my eye on the large woman in a prickly fur coat and hoped she wouldn't pick me, but she did. I had to go with her to a big house with a lot of lights, and women running up and down the stairs. A little man sat by a fire in a square hole in the wall. He had tiny eyes behind the multiple rings of his thick glasses. He pulled out a footstool for me to sit on. He gave me a sixpence. I think Mr. Cohen and I made each other shy. The youngest of the Cohen daughters, sixteen-year-old Ruth, was a generous, clever, spirited girl driven out of all patience with her five dull sisters. I was amazed at the way she dared to yell at her parents, but she took an interest in me and paid me attention and I was grateful and loved her.

And I did my second piece of writing: here I was on that other side of the world for which I had yearned out of the window in Vienna, that gray dusk, the day after Kristallnacht, and it seemed to me that the people here were not properly imagining what was going on in Vienna and what might be happening to my parents.

I bought one of those old schoolbooks with purple covers and a white label with a red border in which English schoolchildren do their homework, and I filled it from front to back with my Hitler stories. It was my first experience of the writer's chronic grief that what was getting down onto the paper was not right, was not all that there was to say. As poor J. Alfred Prufrock puts it, "That is not it at all. That is not what I meant, at all." So I added several sunsets. Ruth got someone to translate it into English. I observed with interest that it made Mrs. Cohen cry.

My parents arrived in Liverpool on my eleventh birthday en route to their job in the South. England was suffering a shortage of domestics, and my mother and father came as a "married couple," that is to say, as cook and butler.

I visited them in the summer holidays, during which time the Cohens found an ailing aunt who needed their care and made it impossible to have me back. Wouldn't

I perhaps like to stay with my parents in Kent?

Between my tenth year, when I came to England with the children's transport, until I went to the University of London at eighteen, I lived in five different families up and down England's class system and across its geography. Since the cook and butler could not have a live-in child, the Church Committee for Jewish Refugees found me a home in nearby Tonbridge. Mr. Gilham was a railroad stoker, a union man, and a socialist. When the younger daughter, Marie, got a scholarship to the local private school, she turned it down, worried that accepting it would constitute a betrayal of her class. When I got it, I went, and the Gilhams found a blind cousin who needed their care.

The Refugee Committee placed me with the family of a munitions worker, whose name I do not remember. I remember that his wife had a bland, round forehead and that the youngest boy set the bathroom curtains on fire. When they moved to the factory town of Croydon, I went to live with her parents, who were called Foster. The old man was a milkman with a little cart and horse. Mrs. Foster had beautiful white hair. They lived in a sooty row house across from the railroad. You stepped up a clean white step into the parlor, behind which lay the kitchen, through which you passed into the yard that the sons were digging up for a bomb shelter. There seemed to me an unusual number of young males, including one smart-ass evacuee from the blitz that was raging over London. The young men shared the front bedroom, and I got the room in back which belonged to the elderly daughter, Ruby, who worked as a lady's maid across town; on her days off she had to sleep at the neighbor's.

The War

Early in 1940, my father and Uncle Paul and all male German-speakers over sixteen were interned on the Isle of Man. Now Kent was designated a "protected area," out of bounds to all "enemy aliens."

I was twelve. When my mother and I arrived in the ancient market town of Guildford in Surrey, I was throwing up. Between bouts, I lay on a bed in a narrow room at the head of a steep stair as my mother read me *David Copperfield* and the concept "writer" burst upon me. I suddenly knew what I was going to be. Come to think of it, I had *been* writing since I was ten.

This was also the day when my father suffered a first and minor stroke. The authorities must have taken a look at him, figured what a nuisance a sick inmate would be in the camp (and that he didn't look like much of a threat to England's war effort), and sent him "home." My father arrived in Guildford with our temporary address on a piece of paper. The policeman whom he approached for directions arrested him for going out after curfew, took him to the police station, and booked him. Then he put my father in a police car and drove him to the house with the steep stairs. All night I kept waking from a nauseous sleep and seeing my parents sitting together on the edge of the other bed, talking. I saw my father cry.

The Guildford Refugee Committee lady was called Miss Wallace. She found my father a job as a gardener; he gardened until his next stroke. She got my mother a job as a cook. And she took me home to live with her older companion, Miss Ellis, in a grand Victorian house with gooseberry and currant bushes, plum trees, a rockery, and a rose garden.

Do I sound snide about my foster families? The fact is that they were not particularly warm or imaginative or sympathetic. Except for Ruth Cohen in Liverpool and Miss Wallace in Guildford, I did not love them. The fact is, also, I was not a particularly lovable child. I leveled a critical eye at my benefactors. At night I wet my bed. I'm astonished—I am moved—that all these people took me in, that they housed me, fed me, clothed me, and looked after me for as long as they could stand me. Needy children abound. How many of us will take a small prickly alien to live in our inmost home? I have not done so.

A Conclusion

When I came to New York in 1951, I went to the New School and took a class in "creative writing." I couldn't think of what to write about. My Holocaust experience, it seemed, was already public knowledge. I read it in the papers and saw it on the newsreels in the movies. It was at a party that somebody asked me a question to which the answer was an account of the children's transport that had brought me to England. It was my first experience of the peculiar silence of a roomful of people listening to what you are telling them. And so I understood that I had a story to tell.

It took me six years to write *Other People's Houses*. I meant to draw no facile conclusions—and all conclusion seemed, and seems to me, facile. I want not to be able to trace the origin and processes by which the past produces the present. The novelist's mode suits me: I posit myself as protagonist in the autobiographical action.

Well then, I'm a tough enough old bird, of the species survivor, naturalized not in North America so much as in New York, in Manhattan, on Riverside Drive. The place fits me. There are things that make me happy.

But I keep out of the movies. I've sat next to friends as they cozy themselves into that communal darkness

and assume their pleasure in what I experience as an acutely disagreeable sensation of suspense. Could a chemist analyze the bloodstream and isolate an additive that produces anxiety? Even nice suspense disagrees with me, and I don't buy lottery tickets. I experience the calamities of my life as a palpable relief from the perennial expectation of calamity.

Reader, you say that I describe your very symptom exactly? You say you're anxious too and you were born in Westchester ten years after Hitler croaked in his bunker? Anxiety, you say, is not the prerogative of the refugee? I should hope not. The novelist does not claim peculiarity or singularity of experience. On the contrary, I depend on you to put your fellow feeling at the service of what I write. But what I write will not be suspenseful. I shy away from the strong event that leads to the strong event; I guarantee you an absence of plot, and myself that I'll not be a good read.

As a reader, I'm fascinated by representations of the intimations of disaster: Giraudoux's "Tiger at the Gate" opens with the Greeks returning from battle. We sit in on the negotiations between Greeks and Trojans trying to prevent the Trojan War, which, as the curtain falls, is about to begin.

As a child, in art class, I remember painting Cassandra with wide eyes and screaming mouth because she had no companion in her knowledge of the destruction at hand.

And there is the moment in Exodus when the foremen return from their interview with Pharaoh:

On that same day Pharaoh summoned his slave drivers and said, From this day on don't give them straw to make the bricks. Let them collect their own straw, but make sure they make the same number of bricks they made yesterday. Don't let them get away with less.

The slave drivers went out and said, Pharaoh says, From now on I will not give you straw. Go gather your own straw.

And they beat the Hebrew foremen and said, Why haven't you made your daily quota of bricks that you have always made before?

The Hebrew foremen went to Pharaoh and cried, What are you doing? It's your own people who won't give us the straw to make the bricks, and then they tell us to make our daily quota and beat us.

Pharoah said, Go get back to work. You'll get no straw, and you'll make the same number of bricks as you made yesterday!

And now the Hebrew foremen saw how things stood and that a bad time was coming.

My own exodus gave a strength that exacted a price: cut yourself off, at ten years old, from feelings that can't otherwise be mastered and it takes decades to become reattached.

Shall I claim that that's what makes me such an inappropriate and inefficient mourner? When my father died in 1945, it was a bleak October, a rough wind. I walked onto the Downs, back of Miss Ellis's house, looking for tears that did not come till 1968—when David, my American husband, insisted that I owed myself a return to my childhood. I cried the whole week in Vienna: I cried at *Lulu* in the Staats Opera; I cried at dinner at the Hotel Sacher where a man played the theme from *The Third Man* on a sentimental zither. "This is silly," I kept saying, "I'm not even feeling particularly sad." But I kept crying. David blew me the saliva bubbles with which he used to amuse our two children, and made me laugh. Then I cried. All through the Austrian Alps I cried and I cried and I cried. We had hired a car. David, who could look at the outside of an inn and know whether the wine would be good, would say, "Let's stay here." But I said, "Let's go to St. Gilgen. There was a lovely lake where we spent my father's last vacation the summer before Hitler. There was a green house with a steep hill on the right." We drove to St. Gilgen and stayed in a chalet with floodlit ivy and ate gray roast beef with the kind of gravy I remember from the Lyon House in postwar London.

I got up in the morning while David slept and went to look for the green house with the steep field. I remembered the contour of the mountain in back, which looked like a man with one shoulder higher than the other. But there was no lake. I turned around and walked in the other direction until a brand new six-lane highway laid itself across my path. There were so many houses! Some fields were steeper than others. The mountains were humped. Could the lake that I remembered in St. Gilgen have been in Mallnitz? And so my father continued dead.

And would that chemist be able to identify the cause of my sometimes inappropriate happiness—of euphoria? Is that, too, a displacement?

My Uncle Paul and I have compared the sense of double vision—the superimposition upon some present comfort of images from the past, or images that could have been from the past. I think we don't entirely settle into good fortune. My mother used regularly to visit her mother's youngest sister, Tante Poldi, in a nursing home in Queens. Tante Poldi died in her nineties and left my mother a couple of thousand dollars which was put in a savings bank. When the monthly statement comes, my mother says, "They have made a mistake," and goes down to the bank, lines up at the counter, and asks the officer to verify her account. The officer calls up the account on the computer; the account is correct. My mother comes home and says, "It's a mistake. I have made withdrawals. I *can't* have this much in the bank."

My mother is perfectly sophisticated and understands about interest. It is her past and her nerves that cannot

accommodate the happiness of solvency.

I think I'm a latter-day Manichaean: I know the devil exists because I have seen his works and have been their victim. I have also seen goodness muddling alongside in Jew and in Christian, and have been its beneficiary.

Politically, I'm addicted to argumentation: I urge the Palestinian cause to my friends on the Right, because they refuse to imagine it. I argue the Israeli case to my leftist friends, because that's what *they* are refusing to imagine. Each believes I belong to the other side. I keep urging them to imagine each other.

Both are tilting with the Kristallnacht in my head, which so engrains everything I mean that I've only lately diagnosed its presence. Let Ecclesiastes speak for me:

> And again I looked and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. I saw the tears of those who are oppressed, and that they have no comforter; power is on the side of the oppressor, but they have no comforter.
>
> Therefore I say that the dead, who have already died, do better than the living who are still alive.
>
> Yes, and better than both are they who have never been born and have not seen the evil business that is done under the sun.

This speaks to me and says that it is my business to imagine the oppressions that are done under the sun, particularly those I am in a position to perpetrate. □

THE CONVENT AND SOLIDARITY

(Continued from p. 31)

cided not to publish the most violent letters, but in one that *was* published, a reader stated: "It does not seem convincing for alien nations and alien religions to have so much to say on our soil." The official press reported foreign criticism, but in an outraged tone. The party daily *Trybuna Ludu* carried the title: "International Jewish Organizations Attack Poland's Cardinal." The message was clear: it is us against them. The official reports gave the impression that only Jews were outraged over Glemp's words. Only *Gazeta* carried a review of the international press, prominently stressing expressions of Catholic indignation. The public, however, seemed to support the Cardinal. Never before had the split been so great between the intellectual/political leadership and the self-righteous majority.

At this point, I must allow myself a personal statement. For years, I have been involved in Christian–Jewish dialogue in Poland and, as a Solidarity journalist, in the struggles of the Polish opposition. As both a Jew and a Pole, I was outraged by Glemp's speech and needed to take a public position on the matter. I wrote an article, summing up my feelings and reflections with the words: "Now I feel in Poland a bit less at home." The Solidarity weekly *Tygodnik,* after much soul-searching, refused to publish the article, though the paper had printed my articles in the past. (The paper later carried a much less critical article.) The editors said that my article was too emotional, that it would probably anger readers and therefore be "counter-productive." While the editors sympathized with my position, they also felt that the fuss over the convent was an issue of only secondary importance, certainly not worth risking the alienation of numerous readers. Another Solidarity weekly newspaper, which is still underground and has a small circulation, offered to print my article, but I decided it was important to reach a large audience. (The weekly, *PWA,* has since published two brief articles that are much harsher toward Glemp than anything I had written.)

So for the first time in my life, I published an article in a communist (if reformist) weekly, *Polityka.* I received much private sympathy from both friends and colleagues, but almost no reaction in the media, and very few letters. In one letter I did receive, a reader reminded me of the role the Jews had played under Stalinism and concluded: "After these experiences, we want no more Jews." Another reader, however, describing herself as a "practicing Catholic," expressed her outrage at Glemp and her solidarity with me. But overall, most of the general public seemed set against the Jews' position on the Carmelite convent.

Within the church itself the climate was changing. Glemp had caused an international scandal and so members of the Polish Catholic elite were also—privately—outraged. The church needed to find a way out. Glemp issued several statements, attempting to be conciliatory, and my own article was reprinted by the Catholic *Tygodnik Powszechny.* As Stanislaw Krajowski had written in an article in *Gazeta,* the course of action on the convent controversy was clear; a negotiated settlement had already been made in Geneva, and that agreement should be honored. Soon the Vatican announced a similar position: the Polish church should honor the agreement.

Yet the fallout from Glemp's statements remain. Why did he say what he said, and why were his sentiments received so warmly by the Polish people? The Cardinal himself is something of a mystery. When Poland was under martial law, he repeatedly offended both Jewish and Polish sensitivities. He was more than conciliatory toward the authorities and quite tepid in his relations with Solidarity. Many Poles consider Glemp plain arrogant and stupid. He does not enjoy the almost mystical adoration enjoyed by his predecessor, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski. Neither does he elicit the simple respect customarily granted to princes of the church in Poland.

One clue to Glemp's actions can be found in his relationship with Professor Maciej Giertych, the Primate's close adviser and self-avowed heir to the tradition of the nationalistic, anti-Semitic prewar National Democratic party. Giertych is the publisher of the recently legalized monthly newspaper, *Slowo Narodowe* (*The National Word*), which advocates the creation of a "Christian-Democrat" party that would continue the National Democratic tradition. This movement is overtly anti-Semitic. *Gazeta* recently denounced *Slowo Narodowe,* and prominent Catholic authorities consider Giertych disreputable. He does have Glemp's ear, however, and the Cardinal has publicly expressed support for a Christian party. (In this he opposes his closest associates, who feel that such a party would splinter the opposition.)

It seems that the proposed party could count on substantial public support. To many, the party would appear to continue the struggle under the banners of Poland and the church, and would serve as a challenge to what many consider the unjustified domination of the Left, which, in the eyes of the public, ranges all the way from Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the newly elected Catholic prime minister, to opposition leaders such as Jacek Kuron, Brontistaw Geremek (now Solidarity parliamentary leader) and Adam Michnik (editor-in-chief of *Gazeta*). The fact that Geremek and Michnik are both Jewish only increases public mistrust.

* * *

It is obvious by now that the Carmelite convent will be moved. The anti-Semitic attitudes raised by the controversy will, however, not disappear overnight. The Polish church must, first of all, make it plain to the faithful that the decision to move the convent is a response not just to Jewish pressure, but also to the demands of the church's own principles. For their part, Jews should avoid triumphalism. One possible way to reduce hostility would be to hold an open meeting at Auschwitz with the parties involved in the convent debate: the Polish Episcopate, the Vatican, the Carmelite order, and the Jewish organizations. Local parishioners should also be included in such a meeting; they do not know the background of the Geneva negotiations, and their reactions are, at least in part, due to disinformation, not malice.

More important still, the Polish church should make a sustained effort to educate the faithful about the Shoah. In this process, the church may even educate itself. Perhaps the Sunday which falls every year before or after Holocaust Remembrance Day should be set aside for this purpose. Finally, the Jews should do their utmost to participate fully in the creation of the new interfaith Center for Information, Education, Encounter, and Prayer, to be located near Auschwitz. After all, the Jews have given their promise to help build the center; but even more important, education is the only way we can expose anti-Semitism as the lunacy it is. □

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS

(Continued from p. 36)

two creatures in all the world: himself and his bitch of an English bull terrier. Despite these personal proclivities, he was in due time appointed by our Chief Executive to a high judicial post, where for many years he meted out equal justice to all under the law.

My fellow passenger sat quietly, taking in the bleak atmosphere of my monk's cell; the enormous pile of books scattered about, opened and unopened, and the untidy mess of papers strewn across the desk. I admit I was flattered by her visit, very much so in fact, and my surprise over the events here set forth was only too manifest.

"So good of you to come," I said.

"Oh, it was that very nice man . . ." she began.

"As for that very nice man . . ." I broke in. Thereupon I proceeded to give a briefing of the rules and regulations governing this formidable institution.

"But why didn't you phone?" I said. "It would have saved you all this trouble."

"I wanted to see you at work. My grandmother always said if you really want to know anything about a person, see him at his work."

"You have a most intelligent grandmother."

"Yes, it's true. That is why I am here. You see, she has just arrived from San Francisco and is coming to dinner tonight. I thought you'd like to meet her. She's a most remarkable woman."

I was tempted to burst into laughter. Grandmother! Really! An entirely novel approach. What a design for romance! If I indicated any reluctance whatsoever, it was definitely attributable to the memory of that trial by vodka. Frankly, I lacked the fortitude for another such caper. She must have sensed my hesitation.

"That silly skirmish with my father.... I'm certain there won't be a repeat performance."

And this is how the fourth episode of my chronicle came to be told.

IV.

Many years have flitted by. Like Marcel Proust's madeleine dipped into his teacup which began the evocation of *Remembrance of Things Past,* the heartfelt memory of that unforgettable meeting with Grandmother has not diminished one whit in the passage of time. It remains as unblurred and real as if it had

happened yesterday.

I shan't linger over food and drink, for these were incidental and would place emphasis where it certainly does not belong. Let me dismiss this particular element of that memorable dinner at once by declaring I had never experienced, before or since, the delight which went into every savory morsel. The lady of the house, the gracious and beautiful Madame K., creator of all that splendor, was a gastronomic artist indeed, and as she moved about imperceptibly, almost invisibly I might add, with no assistance from anyone, serving one succulent dish after another, her magic had all the savoriness of the great Escoffier performing his virtuosity. It was an enchanting feast!

But my concern here is with living people, those rare individuals who leave a profound imprint upon you once you meet them. Alas, they are no longer about; there is no place for them in our time of maddening speedup and carbon copies of men and women, and they are rapidly vanishing from the face of this earth.

How can I ever forget Grandmother Lermontov, the honored guest, whom we all huddled about? She was even more beautiful than Madame K., her daughter; yet twenty years of attrition in the older woman gave an air of sorrow and wisdom which only added grace to her stature. Like her daughter, she carried herself with a fine aristocratic air. She spoke impeccable English with a far softer accent than Madame K., and when I complimented her facility with the language she smiled and said, "That I owe to my convent education."

"But you are a Jew."

"Yes, of course, but vomen in old Russia hadn't mooch choice."

Grandfather L. was an enormous man with pink baby-skin cheeks and a bushy brown mustache which swept his rounded face from ear to ear. When I first caught sight of him I thought that here in all likelihood was the very prototype of Sholokov's Don Cossack, more at home astride a stallion, with saber and rifle, than in a household of intellectual Jews. Actually, he was a simple man, somewhat of a show-off it seemed, but you didn't mind his manner in the least because you knew he lived in the shadow of his wife—and it was, therefore, not unnatural he should be soliciting approval. He performed his bag of tricks almost from the start (and mainly for my benefit). He hung a string from the chandelier, set fire to it, and it remained suspended in the air intact, despite its being burnt to a fine ash. He also did the old pea-game trick and the disappearing coin in the handkerchief, old standbys of circus clowns. After several vodkas he also told a few tall tales; but with a turn of the eye from Madame L., he gave every indication of obeisance. Here the family pattern of paternal dominance was very much inverted.

I have a natural affinity for women and often prefer their company to men. If they are spirited and beautiful, so much the better. If there is an added touch of intellect and a dash of the piquant, I ask the good Lord for no better company.

Madame L. must have sensed this propensity, for she indicated in every conceivable way, almost to the point of embarrassment, a preference for both my ear and my voice. I made allusion to a certain character in *The Brothers Karamazov* and straight off she said, "You are acquainted, no doubt, with Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin?"

"Acquainted is hardly the word, Madame L. For several months after reading *The Idiot* I *was* Prince Myshkin, actually identifying myself with him. But you must forgive me, I was only seventeen at the time."

"Vy should I forgeeve you? Better you should haf remained in that condition a leetle longer. He is good for the soul."

And so we went on hour after hour with Gogol, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorky, and the whole panoply of Russian greats. She seemed to know every line and every character. One thing led to another and there she was in her fascinating way commenting on the subtleties and contrasts of French culture as exemplified by Messrs. Balzac and Stendhal, Flaubert and Proust.

"I conseeder Balzac one of the greatest idiots who effer wrote," she said, warming up to her subject matter. "Ah, but the greatest genius of all except maybe, yes, this I moost qualify, except maybe Proust.... How vell Proust saw it coming—the decline and fall of our precious ceeveelization...."

It would be a gross understatement to refer to Madame L. as a well-read person. She seemed to have complete recall of everything she had ever read, remembering chapter and verse, as though all these fictional men and women were of her creation. Her eyes took on a lusty animation as she threw back her head, delighting in this or that piece of mischief. Even our stern-faced host, who no longer plied me with vodka, sat back in admiration, absorbing the mood and atmosphere of his mother-in-law.

How strange that we, Grandmother L. and I, separated by two generations and an enormous cultural gap, should speak a common language. How well we understood one another—what we said, what we left unsaid.

Recognizing our affinity, she poured a tiny glass of cognac for me and one for herself, then a third.

"Anyushka!" she called out. "Anyushka! Come here my darling—let us drink a toast."

This was the first time I heard that charming diminu-

tive, and it has remained with me ever since.

"To your sveet visdom I drrink!" And she clinked glasses with each of us. "You are a very vise Lermontov—on the female side naturally—to have chosen sooch a fine young man."

I drank the toast, and said that I fully agreed with her opinion.

Madame L. turned to Madame K., her daughter, engaging her in what appeared to be intimate conversation. Since there was a brief respite I remarked to Anyushka, "I am grateful to you. I've never met the likes of her before."

"Perhaps one day you will read her autobiography. She will not have it published during her lifetime."

"Autobiography! She must have three or four packed inside her."

"More than you can imagine," said Anyushka, as she whispered into my ear some biographical secrets, including an early romance and an unfortunate marriage.

Madame L. returned just then and I seized the opportunity to comment, "How come you are so different from most Jews?"

"Een what way?" she asked.

"In every way," I said. "The fact is you and your kinfolk are more like what the Romanovs might have aspired to."

"I think I know what you haf in mind. But remember if you beat a Jew he shows fear and for two thousand years he has been beaten and far vorse. And for two thousand years and more he has meexed with other races of people. Recently, I heard joke about our Chinese brethren who are completely indistingueeshable from other Chinese. You know there iss community of Jewish Chinese practicing their releegion quite seerioosly. A famous American anthropologist veesited them in synagogue, partly professional, party from curioseety. You can eemagine he appeared very strange to them, and in their own synagogue of all places.

"After services, the Rabbi and Shamos approached heem, for they weeshed also to know why he had come.

"'Because I am a Jew,' he said. They were shocked. 'But you don't look Jew,' they said. You see the fallacy. Ghetto Jews look like ghetto Jews; Spanish Jews after centuries like Spaniards. So it goes. Movement of great heestorical forces. Sometimes there are accidents of heestory and that makes wheels of heestory turn faster."

"Then your own wheels have turned very fast indeed," I said.

"Much too fast," said Madame L. "Please allow me to explain. You see, we come from a sad land with a tragic heestory. Have you ever heard of Tolchyn? Eet iss in Ukraine and believe me eet iss not preetty story. You haf never heard of Bogdan Khmelnitzky?"

"No," said I.

We gathered about Grandmother L. and she began to relate something of the history of her birthplace, a history that apparently all the family but Anyushka had heard before, since these bitter events have passed from parent to child for some three centuries or more. Now it was Anyushka's time to discover her own ancestral history from the lament of her grandmother's voice. She called it the Tolchyn Massacre. The time: 1648. That monstrous grim reaper, an army of Cossacks led by Bogdan Khmelnitzky, swept through the Ukraine committing every inhuman atrocity. Pogroms everywhere! As always the Jew was the scapegoat, and so the few survivors able to escape the bloodbath fled to Tolchyn since it was a fortified village and might offer protection. Some fifteen hundred Jews and several hundred Poles swarmed inside the fortress, and both Jews and Poles took a sacred oath to defend Tolchyn to the last inhabitant. Stationed on the walls of the fortress, they fought valiantly. After much fighting, Bogdan K. realized the siege was hopeless. It was the day before Yom Kippur, and he sent an emissary to the leader of the Polish Pans, Count Chetvertinski, assuring the Count that they were interested only in killing Jews—certainly no Pole would be mistreated. The sinister plan worked. That night the gates of the fortress opened to the enemy. Unspeakable horrors! All males, Jews and Poles alike, including the treacherous Count Chetvertinski, were butchered in a gruesome slaughter. Women, old and young, raped! The Chief Rabbi of the Ukraine issued an edict in 1648 that the legitimacy of children born of Jewish mothers must never be questioned.

"There you haf that whole terrible hell," said Grandmother Lermontov with a deep sigh. "Now vee all drink and make merry, yes? This iss no time for tears." She poured cognac into every glass and as we drank she cried out, "All men are brothers, Bogdan Khmelnitzky!"

Her voice, soft and modulated until now, sounded an awesome note. Suddenly a strange thing happened. She laughed as though her laughter might wash away all those accumulated sorrows, and she proceeded to tell a story, a very fascinating one, by Sholem Aleichem. She told the story in Yiddish, the only way I suppose his stories can really be told. Mr. K., who had been unusually silent until now, related two tales—I still remember—Mr. Sex and the coming of Elijah to Berdiechev. One story led to another, and there was a veritable outcropping of magnificent folk tales. Everyone contributed. The remarkable thing about these tales was how fitting they were to the occasion. They were not only a delight to hear, but were charged with compassion and understanding.

During the following years, I saw Grandmother L. many times, as I saw her growing into a fine old age. The last time Anyushka and I saw her she spoke with difficulty and her breathing was hard. But this she said

to us: "I haf only *one* weesh. God grant I lif to see Hitler meet his final doom."

This amazing woman held onto life, alert to the end through the last day of the war, to see her wish granted.

There is still another confirmation of the great spirit of Grandmother L. Shortly after her death, I came into possession of an excellent library, an inheritance from my father. Among all these books covering almost every field of knowledge, I found, in three volumes, "History of the Jews in Russia and Poland" by S. M. Dubnow, the celebrated historian. There, in Chapter V, I found the whole account (with footnotes and references) of the grisly massacre of Tolchyn. Comparing the two accounts, I can only say that, if anything, Grandmother L. had understated the Tolchyn holocaust.

V.

Anyushka and I have traveled up and down this troubled earth many times during these passing years. We have also been to that vast land of Madame Lermontov's, the USSR, four times in as many years, and each time on extensive journeys. We have met with all manner of people on every continent, and if a comparison is to be made, it is my conviction that Soviet people are among the friendliest and most hospitable in the world. I can recount endless incidents of their generosity, the likes of which have been rare in our travels. As for their officials, I am constrained to take a dimmer view.

In the course of our last visit we lingered for some days in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, scene of the Babi Yar massacre. After the fall of Kiev to the Germans in 1941, the Nazis rounded up the Jews *en masse,* marched them off to the outskirts of Kiev, and at the very edge of the ravine known as Babi Yar, machine-gunned some 35,000 men, women, and children—a mass annihilation of the city's Jewish population. (Though a number of accounts state a much higher slaughter of 100,000 or more, Molotov issued the official statement that 33,771 Jews were murdered on Rosh Hashana, Sept. 29–30, 1942.) In this fiendish carnage, the Nazis had the full cooperation of the Ukrainian Polizei of the USSR.

How was all this savagery possible? Anatoly Kuznetsov, a child of twelve at the time of this barbarism, relates the chilling scenes in his book, *Babi Yar.* To this day, every inhabitant of the USSR must carry a card of national identity, an internal passport, and thus Jews had the benefit of their ancestry ("Evrei," Russian for Jew) stamped or written on their cards, a carryover from Czarist police days. Hence, identification was simplified for the Nazis and their massive butchery unwittingly given a helping hand. On all Soviet *external* passports for travel abroad, these marks of racial identification are not inscribed.

Kuznetsov had good companions. Yevgeny Yevtushenko memorialized the tragedy in his epic poem, "Babi Yar." Shostakovich put the poem into imperishable music. As a consequence, more of these superb artists—all non-Jews—endeared themselves to their erstwhile Kremlin brass.

One fine spring day Anyushka and I were taken by our guide to Babi Yar. We traversed the impressive memorials to the Nazi victims and the hundreds of plaques, but could find no trace anywhere noting the massacre of the Jews of Kiev. When I mentioned this to our guide, she grew somewhat disturbed, then remembered that there was one burial plaque among the multitude with the name of a Jew recorded. Anyushka smiled in a way reminiscent of her grandmother's smile. Then she said, "Apparently the authorities only identify the living."

Afterwards we climbed the bluff overlooking beautiful Kiev and its magnificent green parks. In full view below, the mighty Dnieper flowed quietly, as it has from the beginning of time. But the specter of Babi Yar hung over us. As we descended and rode through the rebuilt city, which had been completely destroyed by the Germans, we came upon an imposing square with a considerable monument dedicated to one of the Ukrainian heroes. Our guide informed us that it was to honor a great Ukrainian statesman responsible for uniting the Ukraine with Czarist Russia. It was not a particularly good work of art, a commonplace dereliction in this land of superb painters and sculptors. Nonetheless, we did our duty and paid homage. On the granite block bearing the mighty Ukrainian statesman, the chiseled legend read:

Zinovi Bogdan Khmelnitsky
1595–1657

Looking up at the cold stark figure I drew back, meanwhile recalling Grandmother L.'s story about the Tolchyn Massacre. And so I respectfully addressed the statue and said what Grandmother L. would have said. I spoke the words quietly, so as not to disturb the dead interred in that haunting ravine of Babi Yar:

"But all men are brothers, Bogdan Khmelnitzky!" □

A bronze memorial forty-six feet in height was unveiled at Babi Yar on July 2, 1976, symbolizing twelve figures, arms linked together. The inscription: "Here the German fascist occupiers killed more than 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war in 1941–43." The fact that the overwhelming number of victims were Jews was not mentioned.

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