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

TIKKUN

Current Debate: *A Palestinian State?*
Personal Essay: *Shana Penn*
Poetry: *Susan Abraham, Stanley Moss & Carol Edelstein*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1990 $5.00

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT?

Todd Gitlin, Peter Gabel, Holly Sklar, Tom Hayden, L.A. Kauffman, Sven Birkerts, Stanley Aronowitz, Frances Fox Piven & Richard A. Cloward



The Patriarchs
Jay Cantor

A Story
Joyce Carol Oates

AIDS Activism
Larry Kramer

Soviet Prospects, Jewish Fears
Alan Snitow

Women Radicals
Christine Stansell

Havel & Media Cynicism
Jay Rosen

Edmond Jabès
Peter Cole

Feminist Men
Terry Allen Kupers

The Holocaust Museum
Howard Husock

PLUS

Judith Plaskow on Women & Prayer; Deborah Kaufman on the Jewish Film Festival in Moscow; Jonathan Wilson on Workshop Poetry; Jefferson Morley on Rock in the Eastern Bloc; Nehemia Polen on the Steinsaltz Talmud; and Norman Weinstein on Vilna Songs.

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New Moon

Walking from my car to the back door,
I was aware of something previously unnoticed,
a bright haze within a cloud—my mind entered
as if memory contained a foreknowledge
and I could in darkness, for myself, and others,
speak something lunar, be my own Ordinary
of secrets, memory, and rebirth....
I perceive as darkness the poetry of iron,
the only speech the moon responds to
with its radium kiss.
The sacred gift of greeting is devoured.

In my silent holy books I find, after the blessings
called "The Giving Thanks for Trees Blossoming"
and "The Giving Thanks for Fragrance,"
prayers for the new moon, in large type,
night prayers for unconscious sins and new beginnings,
to be read outside in moonlight, or at an open window.
I speak of prayer, it is not prayer.
I count syllables like minutes before sunset.
I have nothing to show to the new moon
but a few lines about the present,
the lesser time under the sun.

Old enough, I have learned to be my own child:
I carry myself on my shoulders, laughing and scolding.
To get even, have I lived my life to make adults cry?
Tonight the child runs to and from me,
already full of memory and cruel history,
talking a blue streak about injustices.
The child falls asleep, I'm up late.
It is not revelation
but the mystery itself I praise.

—*Stanley Moss*

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Letters

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

Abortion Debate

To the Editor:

Quirk's premise is so shaky that the argument quickly collapses ("The Left's Wrong Turn on Abortion," *Tikkun*, Mar./Apr. 1990). He assumes that the idea of "self-evident rights" has been "discredited." What planet is he referring to? On this one, "self-evident rights" are the engines that are reshaping Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, South Africa, and (keep your fingers crossed) Latin America.

Self-evident individual rights, rights that exist *despite* the will of the majority, are exactly what the Bill of Rights is about. Quirk's "communitarianism" leads him to grant the "benefit of the doubt" to the "humanity" of the fetus as against the claim to privacy and autonomy of one who is indisputably human—the pregnant woman.

Quirk further argues that even if abortion alleviates suffering, so does easing the crush and grind of poverty, and so do encouragement, love, and trust for the pregnant teenager, which, he suggests, we should provide instead. But why not both? Of course abortion isn't the *only* solution to the suffering and pain of many women who choose abortion. Does that mean abortion should be prohibited?

Quirk's goal is to promote the "virtue" of the community. Public enforcement of someone else's notion of "virtue"—now there's a truly discredited notion.

Kathleen Peratis
President
New York Civil Liberties Union

To the Editor:

Michael Quirk shares with most other anti-choice advocates the notion that consensual sex must carry the potential penalties of unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children, which he describes as "sacrifice for the sake of the common good." How can one speak of a "common good" when only women, and not men, are called to "sacrifice"? In the case of childbearing, appeal to the "common good" is especially heinous because the majority of those affected are poor, just as were

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the majority victimized by America's adventures in Vietnam, Grenada, and Panama. If there is any logic to Quirk's claim that access by poor women to unrestricted abortion "helps forestall serious discussion about poverty and distributive justice," then blocking access makes any such discussion moot.

Incidentally, I am puzzled about why Quirk, along with some "kinder and gentler" opponents of choice, might permit abortions for conceptions through incest or rape. If a fetus is a person, why is the fetal product of incest or rape any less a person? Finally, Quirk and his fellows seem, paradoxically, to permit abortions in cases of consensual incest. As Jews we must feel particularly fortunate that our mother Sarah who was married to her half-brother Abraham did not avail herself of this permission to abort Isaac in utero.

David Sperling
Roslyn Heights, New York

Michael J. Quirk responds:

Ms. Peratis and Mr. Sperling's letters are good examples of the sort of "abstractness" that continues to plague the abortion debate. Abortion becomes a matter of "principle" rather than a highly complex moral and social issue, which calls for *different* moral and legal responses in different situations. This sort of abstractness typifies the avid pro-lifer who harasses and vilifies abortion clinic clients, but who cares little about the postnatal well-being of those he or she wishes to see born, and even less about promoting a social climate in which the "family values" of responsibility and fidelity make even minimal sense. But it also characterizes the pro-choicer who, construing abortion as entirely a matter of the "right to privacy," glosses over the very real differences between types of abortion, evades all metaphysical questions about what the fetus might be and the difference this might make, and fails to consider the effects of widespread abortion on the society at large.

Ms. Peratis thinks my skepticism about "self-evident" rights is downright Martian, and cites assorted liberation movements to buttress her point. But if you closely inspect the "first-languages" of these movements (to borrow Robert Bellah's phrase), I think you will find them *less* congenial to individualistic liberalism than to biblical, republican, and even nationalistic traditions. The idioms of Poland's Solidarity and the *communidades de base* of Latin America are specifically religious, and seem to be less concerned with establishing individualistic claim-rights than addressing specific affronts to the community—namely, the impoverishment and oppression of the masses by capitalist or Communist thugs. All this is, I think, a far cry from the worldwide victory of liberal individualism which Ms. Peratis celebrates. And I rather doubt that Oscar Romero, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, or Lech Walesa would deem "virtue" a "truly discredited notion."

What I hoped to convey in "The Left's Wrong Turn on Abortion" was the need to take another look at *Roe v. Wade*. Mary Ann Glendon, in her book *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law,* argued that *Roe*'s individualistic rhetoric damaged not only the possibility for a rational public compromise on abortion, but deprived abortion law of its *symbolic* force: that however lenient abortion legislation may be, abortion is *always* symbolized as a grave matter for both the individual *and* the community and is *not* to be taken lightly. This sentiment is, I hope, something *both* "pro-choicers" and "pro-lifers" can agree upon. But as long as the issue is framed as a battle of "rights"—of "self-evident" pre-political principles that are not negotiable—no consensus will ever be forged, millions of abortions will continue to take place, and women, especially poor women, will continue to suffer.

German Reunification

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner is rightly concerned about a possible nationalist resurgence in Germany, about a change in the European political balance, and about a new amnesia in relation to the Shoah. ("'No' to German Reunification," Mar./Apr. 1990).

Yes, there are some Germans singing World War II songs; yes, there are neo-Nazis in the West and even some now in West Germany; yes, there are some German historians downplaying Nazi crimes and German leftists comparing Begin to Hitler; yes, there was Bitburg.

Nevertheless, a very large number of Germans *do* remember the Shoah—and at least until last year, they remembered it to a point where it made many of us Jews in Germany uncomfortable: ten thousand or more(!) individual commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of Kristallnacht was anything but amnesia—it was an epidemic of commemoration. Yes, there was the U.S.-German complicity at Bitburg, but there was, after all, a barrage of criticism in Germany; and those who point to Bitburg simply should not forget Willy Brandt on his knees at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial—the same Willy Brandt, by the way, who is one of the strongest supporters of unification.

Those historians who downplayed Nazi crimes have been solidly discredited in Germany—as have the leftists who likened Begin to Hitler. It is simply untenable to generalize and say that the Germans *tout court* have not dealt with their past. Where we should raise questions is *how* they have dealt with it and how they will be dealing with it *now.* And while there are plenty of neo-Nazis and anti-Semites in Germany today (and many more who "love" Jews and hate immigrants) the figures tend to be worse for most major Eastern European countries. Kohl and company notwithstanding, there is no question that the political climate in Germany today is more progressive than that of the U.S. and even that of Canada.

Germany today is not the Germany of Bismarck or of 1933, and you cannot take Germany as an immutable package.

Tikkun Discussion Group Members: Please Write Home!

Many local *Tikkun* discussion groups have popped up around the country. Unfortunately, we don't always have a way to keep in touch with these groups or to let others know how to make contact with them. If you are in such a group, please drop us a note telling us how to reach you or a group coordinator, and how others can join. Similarly, if you are interested in participating in such a group but don't know of one in your area, please contact us. It may be that a discussion group already exists in your area, or perhaps we can work with you to set one up. Please write to us: *Tikkun* Discussion Groups, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619.

Prussia has been smashed; the reactionary Junker class and the militaristic industrial barons from the Ruhr have disappeared; and the Protestant church in its majority has become a largely positive democratic force and, contrary to what the editorial asserted, has indeed and with much soul-searching dealt with its complicity with nazism. In short, the political elites have fundamentally changed even from the time of the postwar conservative restoration.

Michael Bodemann
Toronto, Ontario

To the Editor:

The anti-Germanism expressed in Michael Lerner's editorial "'No' to German Reunification" is deeply disturbing—indeed, not very different from the anti-Semitism whose resurgence in Germany he claims to fear.

As someone who was herself a refugee from the Nazis, whose family left Vienna on the day of the Anschluss in March 1938, it would be natural for me to mistrust the Germans and to fear the power a reunited Germany might have. But if we put our prejudices aside—and we must put them aside—we will recognize that for the past forty-five years West Germany has been one of the most democratic nations in the world, a nation that has combined a market economy with excellent social benefits, and has produced an impressive artistic and literary culture.

To begin with: who are *we* to decide the fate of Germany? Does Lerner really think it's up to us to "say no" to reunification? Isn't that itself the "policeman of the world" stance American liberals supposedly deplore? Obviously the Germans will do as they please and will not wait for the U.S. to tell them what to do.

As for the argument that "national self-determination is not an absolute right, but conditional on how it is used," I would respond: and who is to judge the user? The Germans are not wayward children to be pushed around and punished if they don't "use" their nationalism in ways that suit us!

Nowhere in his editorial does Lerner say a word about the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness that the East Germans (most of them born *after* World War II) just might be entitled to, having been sentenced to forty-five years of communism with the tyranny, police state, environmental pollution, and just plain poverty that that entails.

As Jews we should be especially sensitive to "othering" a nation, race, religion, and so on. To talk of "the Germans" as Lerner does throughout his editorial is to assume that there are certain German characteristics that *the Germans* can't avoid having. Isn't this precisely what anti-Semitism is all about? You know, *those pushy Jews ...*

Marjorie Perloff
Stanford, California

The Editor responds:

Affirmative action for women and African-Americans in the U.S. puts some white men at a comparative disadvantage, even though they were not even born when slavery existed or when sexism was most rampant. To the extent that people share the benefits accruing from being part of an historical community that has engaged in past wrongs, they have some responsibility for rectifying the consequences of those past wrongs, even if they were not personally involved.

The German people have a massive job of repairing to do, and not only toward Jews. The hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees sitting in displaced-persons camps after World War II created an urgency for a Jewish state that made it impossible for us to take the years, perhaps decades, it might have needed to work out a relationship with the Palestinians that would not have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of them. Similarly, the current inability of many Israelis to trust anyone or imagine a world not completely dominated by implacable hostility toward Jews is a direct legacy of the Holocaust.

Money and resolutions from the Bundestag can't rectify these consequences of German imperialism. It will take a massive effort of German creativity and a commitment by the entire German people to figure out how it can begin to rectify these wrongs. Similarly, the distortions in Eastern Europe and the massive economic underdevelopment of the Soviet Union cannot be solely blamed on the failures of centralized planning—the economic devastation caused by the German invasion and the murder of tens of millions of people can't be shrugged off. Only a German people that accepts responsibility by dedicating its intellectual and economic and political resources to healing the pain it has created has any right to ask to be accepted amongst the family of nations.

Who are we to say this? The victims and children of the victims. And what right does the U.S. have to intervene? The same right as we do to impose sanctions against South Africa, to oppose apartheid, or to impose integration in the South even though the democratic majority in the South seemed to support segregation. America's major crime in the world is not that it interferes in others' affairs, but that it intervenes to support elites of wealth and power that frustrate the democratic rights of their own people. Interfering in others' affairs is dangerous, and should be done with great caution, but noninterference as an absolute is equally dangerous and potentially as immoral.

Jewish Communal Materialism?

To the Editor:

Let me begin by saying that I am a regular reader of your publication, and I find it enjoyable and provocative. Please do not construe my comments as adversarial.

I am offended by Michael Lerner's usage of the adjectives "materialistic" and "conformist" to describe "the American Jewish world" (from an article distributed by the magazine entitled "Facing Jewish Ambivalence in 1989"). He has used these two epithets to describe U.S. Jewry in a variety of places, from his article "Who Speaks for American Jews?" in the *New York Times* (Feb. 24, 1989), to the advertisements in the back of *Tikkun* for the December 1988 conference. Sometimes he qualifies "the American Jewish world" as the "organized" American Jewish world. Sometimes he does not.

First let me address "materialistic." We are all well aware that American Jews fare better financially than many other groups in the U.S. population. We also know that many individual Jews are not innocent of greed. But to label (even "organized") American Jewry as "materialistic" on the whole is to accept and further broadcast an old anti-Semitic canard.

Perhaps it is true that "organized"

Jewry tends to promote leaders contingent on the size of their contributions to the organizations (as Lerner claims in the *New York Times* article), but this can be explained by various factors, such as the major role those organizations play in collecting *tzedaka* (charity) for Israel.

The practice of bestowing leadership positions on those who possess expert fiduciary managerial skills and who contribute heavily became common as charities like the UJA, which accumulated a $650 million debt by 1981, found themselves in desperate straits because they had previously relied so heavily on personalities rather than on proficient executives to lead them. "Organized" Jewry seems institutionally prone to thrust business leaders to the top ranks of its leadership. Understandably, this could create an atmosphere in which economic priorities seem to rank first.

But I suspect that the necessarily materialistic tenor of many Jewish organizations is not a major factor in the alienation of Jewish youth in comparison to the aridity of Jewish educational and religious institutions. These are what permanently scared most of my Jewish friends away from an active affiliation with Jewish life. Not everyone is political; most Jews who are lost to Judaism are lost as a result of disappointing early contacts with the grass roots of Jewish culture, prior to ever hearing about *Commentary,* the ADL, or AIPAC.

Some of the most "materialistic" *individual* Jews I know are left-liberal *Tikkun* readers. So let's apply this adjective discriminatingly, carefully, to whom it modifies, and let's not apply it wholesale against masses of Jews we haven't met personally.

I have just as much of a problem with the term "conformist," though for a different reason. One may disagree with the values of those in the camp of "organized" Jewry, but there is no good reason to question the sincerity of the beliefs of those in that community.

Robert Jancu
Stanford, California

To the Editor:

In your editorial "'No' to German Reunification" (*Tikkun,* Mar./Apr. 1990), there was a parenthetical comment that upset me:

> ... a position that was recently bolstered by the work of Arab terrorists, whose murder of Israeli civilians on a tour bus in Cairo gave aid and comfort to Israeli right-wingers.

What upset me was that *Tikkun*'s editor has the image that a group of Jews would derive comfort from the murder of fellow Jews by Arab terrorists.

This is typical of *Tikkun*'s attitude that the world is divided into the good guys and the bad guys, friend or foe. Instead of presenting a point of view to be accepted or rejected, *Tikkun* has the tendency to label all opposing points of view as somehow warped, and those who hold them as somewhat malicious.

Tikkun often refers to "the leaders of the 'organized Jewish community'" as if they do not have the best interests of the Jewish community at heart. *Tikkun* often claims that these "leaders of the organized Jewish community" do not represent *Tikkun*'s point of view.

Who are these unnamed "leaders"? How did they get to be "leaders"? My impression is that they worked their hearts out for the community. People with liberal opinions can also become community leaders by the same method and have their points of view represented.

When I first began to read *Tikkun* I thought I was a liberal. *Tikkun* has made me a conservative by placing me outside the pale of liberalism whenever I disagree with any stand *Tikkun* takes.

Gladys Sturman
Calabasas, California

The Editor responds:

Gladys Sturman has a legitimate complaint. In our formulation about the people who would gain from attacks on Israeli civilians, we mistakenly said that Israeli right-wingers would get comfort from that attack, thereby implying that they would subjectively enjoy it. That was a mistake. We should have said that their position and the legitimacy of their claims could only be enhanced by these kinds of attacks, just as the attacks by West Bank Israeli settlers on Palestinians and the light sentences meted out for these heinous crimes (most recently Rabbi Levinger's five-month sentence for murdering a Palestinian in Hebron) only give legitimacy to extremists in the Palestinian camp.

Ms. Sturman points out that people become community leaders by "working their hearts out." Our experience is that there are many people who work their hearts out for the interests of the Jewish community, but most of those who become leaders in the organized Jewish community have become leaders not simply because they have worked hard, nor because they are recognized for their wisdom, knowledge of Judaism, or the feelings and sentiments of most Jews, but rather because of their ability to donate or get others to donate money. It is these people whose viewpoints are disproportionately represented in the leadership of the organized Jewish community.

What's so bad about that? After all, as Robert Jancu argues in his letter, many Jewish organizations are charity-oriented, so naturally they turn to those who can raise or donate money. The problem here is that these groups regularly present themselves as "*the* Jewish Community" rather than as the fund-raising arm. The federations have the money to fund the Jewish newspapers that, in turn, define for the community what activities are important and what are not, who is to be taken seriously and who not. There is no democratic apparatus through which all Jews can vote to select who speaks in their name or who appropriates the title of "Jewish leader."

In the process, traditional Jewish values get lost. Those with wisdom, those with a passion for social justice, those who have shown an open heart and caring soul are seen as irrelevant sidelights, while those who can donate $10,000 to a Jewish charity are put forward as role models and spokespeople. Jancu thinks that this has little to do with the alienation young Jews experience as they are exposed to Jewishness. We think it is central. Where Jewish values do prevail over money (for example, in some religious communities and in some Zionist youth organizations) there is a smaller attrition rate. If the Jewish world were dominated by a passion for social justice, love of God, spiritual search, honor for learning and wisdom, democratic organization, compassion, and honest

(Continued on p. 77)

Editorials

Michael Lerner

Short Takes

Environmental Violence. Anybody around willing to be tough on crime? Then how about sending to prison the people who do large-scale environmental damage? It's easy to understand the crime committed when one person directly attacks another on the street. But this is small potatoes compared to the corporations that mug entire cities. Environmental violence is rarely a victimless crime: many of those dying of cancer today are its direct victims. If we sent corporation executives and major shareholders in corporate polluters to prison, we would quickly find a whole new environmental ethic emerging in American society. And let's stop right-wingers from coddling corporate criminals. In fact, the only reason why liberals don't ride this issue to electoral victory in the 1990s is that frequently they too are in bed with the same corporate polluters.

Soviet Jews on the West Bank? Just as we feared (*Tikkun,* May/June 1990), Prime Minister Shamir's attempt to use Soviet Jews as a solution to Israel's Palestinian problem by settling them on the West Bank, something he publicly hinted at when he talked of them as proof for the need of a "Greater Israel," has now backfired. During his recent trip to the U.S., Gorbachev publicly mused about the possibility of curtailing emigration until he can get assurances that Soviet immigrants will not be settled in the occupied territories.

Both leaders are on the wrong track. The right to emigrate should not be curtailed—particularly where increasingly pronounced anti-Jewish statements have caused a well-founded fear for the physical safety of Jews in the Soviet Union. That this fear has also been fanned by various Jewish organizations for fund-raising bonanzas (see Alan Snitow, this issue) does not diminish our legitimate concern over the safety of Soviet Jews. Those who really care should make two immediate demands: Israel should state unequivocally that it will not settle *any* Soviet Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories; and the U.S. should drop its quotas and admit to the U.S. all Soviet Jews who prefer the U.S. as their destination.

Meanwhile, we at *Tikkun* remain deeply disturbed at Gorbachev's failure to speak out publicly against anti-Semitism in any but the most perfunctory way, and at his appointment of a prominent anti-Semite to his cabinet.

Post-Summit Blues? Not us. In responding so enthusiastically to Gorbachev during his visit to the U.S., Americans were indicating their joy at his most profound accomplishment: ending the cold war. If the Democratic party were not dominated by timid centrists, it could channel that developing new domestic policies to provide health care, education, housing, and a retooling of basic industries toward peacetime production. The people are ready, but the leadership is lacking.

Shamir's Hard-Right Government. A disaster for the Jewish people and for the hopes of peace in the Middle East, the new Israeli government that took office in June will increase repressive measures against Palestinians, intensify settlement of the West Bank, and further erode civil liberties. Haven't the Jewish people suffered enough? Do we really need to distinguish ourselves by bucking the historical trend that moves toward democracy and liberalization in countries from South Africa to the Soviet Union?

The one bright spot: If Labor manages to resist pressures to join the government as a junior partner to Shamir in order to further the peace-process—which Shamir would torpedo if it were in danger of producing real results—then we might finally see a Labor party leading the opposition and building popular support for a peace politics that could lead it to electoral victory in the next election.

Good Riddance to Bad Rubbish

Not since the Crusaders and Inquisitors managed to defile the fundamentally decent impulses underlying Christianity has any group so distorted and ruined the high ideals and hopes of millions as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union managed to do in the twentieth century. For several decades in this century, the idealism of tens of millions of people around the world was cynically manipulated by a party more interested in maintaining its own power than in building a society that would embody the ideals of socialism.

Of course, we understand the social conditions that led to the triumph of Stalinism. Lenin never thought

that socialism could be built in a backward peasant society without the help of successful revolutions amongst the more advanced working classes of Western Europe. When revolutionary uprisings failed in post-World War I Europe, the Bolsheviks could have called for free elections (which they would have certainly lost) and become an oppositional party within a Russian democracy that they helped create. Instead, they imagined that they could retain power in the name of a working class that the Party would have to create (since most workers had been killed defending the new Communist experiment against a civil war between 1919 and 1922 that had been spurred and paid for, in part, by the U.S., Britain, and France). While Leon Trotsky understood that it would be impossible to maintain socialist ideals amongst a peasant population that had neither education nor desire for democracy unless the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) were to succeed in stimulating revolutions throughout the world, Stalin appealed to the exhaustion and "realism" of the Soviets when he created the fantasy of what he called building socialism in one country (the Soviet Union) that would be insulated from the dynamics of the international capitalist market.

The resulting distortions and crimes do not need restating here. In addition to the tens of millions of people murdered or imprisoned in the terror that Stalin's paranoia let loose, there are countless millions more who have died in third-world countries around the world—victims of American, British, French, Italian, and Japanese imperialism—who might have succeeded in obtaining freedom and dignity had they not been faced with a world that turned its back on the cries of the oppressed. That denial of the oppression was, in part, a consequence of the ultimate triumph of cynicism in the twentieth century. Far too many people gave up on the possibility of healing and repairing the world because they had heard the language of morality and liberation being manipulated by the criminal elements of the Soviet Communist Party.

To be sure, the Jewish people owes a debt of thanks to those Communists who stood up proudly to oppose anti-Semitism and fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, and to the millions of people in the Soviet Union who gave their lives to stop Hitler's advances. When one witnesses the tremendous power of anti-Semitism in Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine, it is easy to imagine other possible historical scenarios in which the Jewish people of Europe would have been decimated without there being any countervailing power like that of the Soviets. Historical arguments to the contrary are easy to dream up. What we know for sure is that in this instance, it was a good thing that the Russian people fought valiantly against German fascism. Their sacrifice—now estimated at 26,000,000 dead—should not be forgotten.

Yet even this proud moment in Soviet history was decidedly compromised by the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, which divided up Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union and allowed Hitler to put his energy into attacking France and Britain. Throughout the history of Communist rule of the Soviet Union, there was an effort to force the assimilation of the Jewish people. While officially supporting the right to national self-determination of other groups, the Communists never recognized the national rights of the Jewish people. Hence, Zionism was considered an aberration, and later a crime. Jews on the Left, anxious to prove their "internationalist" credentials, were often the most vigorous enforcers of an anti-Zionism and anti-Judaism that pervaded Soviet policy and practice. Rather than actively combat anti-Semitism, certainly as pervasive in the Soviet Union as racism against Blacks has been in the United States, the Jews in the CPSU did their best to ignore the issue. Stalin's murderous personal anti-Semitism, which eventually culminated in the near destruction of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, set a tone for hostility toward Jews that people on the Left often denied though the Soviets only barely camouflaged it throughout much of the history of the past seventy years.

In our founding editorial statement in 1986, we made it clear that *Tikkun* "would be critical of Soviet totalitarianism even if it did not specifically oppress Jews." But we went on to note that

> we are very critical of the Left because of its attempt to force Jews into a false universalism—denying the particularity of our historical experience, the validity of our religious insights, the importance of our national survival. Jews have been forced to choose between a loyalty to their own people and a loyalty to universal ideals. This has been particularly striking because the Left has often glorified "national liberation struggles," seeing in other people's insistence on their own customs and traditions a potential force for liberation. Yet it has often been demeaning and destructive toward Jews and Jewish culture.

While we were critical of the Left, we insisted on the strong bonds between Jews and the radical tradition in politics:

> Radical politics has often adopted the idealism and commitment to justice that are central to the Jewish tradition. The articulation of the needs of the oppressed, the unwillingness to compromise with unfair distributions of power and wealth, the

historical link between the Left and the underdog, have brought many Jews into the world of radical politics. The utopian demand for transformation is something we proudly identify with—it remains a central ingredient in Jewish vision.

Indeed, one of the worst legacies of the Communist Party remains in the damage it has done to the utopian demand for tikkun. Some of the most moral and decent people in the twentieth century joined the Communist parties of the world, fought fascism, struggled on behalf of the oppressed. That they could find their energies so deeply betrayed and scurrilously manipulated by the CPSU remains a deep shame in the history of social change movements. We have, I hope, learned once and for all that there can be no substitute for democratic control—not only over society, but also over those who struggle to change society.

We wish Gorbachev well in his efforts to reform Soviet society. Yet for all the above reasons, we cannot tremble in sorrow at the prospects of the demise of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Whether the Party is irrevocably split this summer or whether it takes several more years to fall, we will shed few tears for its inevitable loss of power. Out of its ashes are rising new political movements organized to carry the democratic reform process even further. There are also more venal forces eager to take the Russian people in destructive directions. These latter derive much of their credibility from the terrible legacy of the CPSU, which they describe as a Zionist conspiracy. If there is to be a democratic socialist future for the Russian people, it will require sharp repudiation of the Communist Party that has played such a terrible role in discrediting social ideals.

Negotiating With Terrorists

Terrorism like that recently attempted against Israelis on the beach in Tel Aviv is depraved, and we detest it. But when there is a war going on, the fact of terrorism doesn't obviate the need to find an end to the war. And that necessarily means negotiating with the enemy, even if the enemy uses detestable tactics. We seek negotiations with the PLO not because we find them a morally credible force, but because they have the power to bring peace. It makes no sense to insist that the PLO be "good guys" before we talk to them.

Of course, terrorist attacks are not only immoral, they are stupid. They give the Israeli Right precisely the excuse it has been looking for to deep-freeze the peace process. It's not hard to imagine the PLO response to that argument: "The peace process was already frozen, not only by Shamir but by Peres and Rabin. No matter what kind of government dominates Israeli politics in the period ahead, nobody on the Israeli side seems ready to deal with our fundamental demands for national self-determination. So how long do you think our own people will support us and our 'moderate' profile while the Arab fundamentalists tell them that no reconciliation with Israel will ever be possible? If we can't produce something concrete in the way of forward movement toward national self-determination, people will turn to a more radical leadership."

Fine. The argument makes sense, but it's still no excuse for terrorist attacks such as the one a militant faction of the PLO launched on Tel Aviv after a lone Israeli murdered seven Palestinians in cold blood. There is a profound moral difference between terrorist attacks and the unintentional killings of civilians that occur while Israeli troops enforce their occupation. The Israeli government has prosecuted soldiers for human rights abuses and Israeli civilians have been prosecuted for attacking Palestinians. The dynamic of the occupation may foster these abuses, and may have created a climate in which the shooting of seven Palestinians in Rishon Le Tziyon emerged, but attacks on Palestinian civilians is *not* official government policy. The madman who did that shooting was arrested.

No Arab regime has ever brought charges against those engaged in terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians. This distinction may be small comfort for Palestinians who witness their children being shot in the streets or their homes being invaded by Israeli soldiers seeking rock-throwers. It makes a big difference, however, to the many Israelis who believe that the Palestinians want to use their proposed Palestinian state alongside Israel as a launching pad for a second stage of struggle to recapture all of Palestine.

Palestinians, for their part, feel that the U.S.—in threatening to break off its dialogue with the PLO—is making a big deal over an attempted terrorist attack while little official attention is given to the huge number of Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers during the intifada. Palestinians are particularly outraged that the U.S. vetoed efforts to have the UN introduce neutral observers to monitor the situation.

While we can understand Palestinian frustrations, we wish that the PLO would understand that the Palestinian people are involved in a long struggle, and that violence is self-destructive. The only way Palestinians can win is to convince the Israeli populace that it would be safe with a demilitarized Palestinian state on its border. Terrorist attacks might boost morale in the refugee camps, but they will never bring the peace that the Palestinians seek. In fact, the attacks strengthen the

hand of the Israeli Right. If the PLO had any sense, it would unequivocally condemn the attack, expel the perpetrators, and thus confirm in deed the renunciation of terrorism to which it has recently given lip service.

A growing number of Americans now see through the surface of the issue and are fast becoming disillusioned with Israeli policies. We who love Israel fear that Americans will become even more deeply alienated from Israel unless dramatic forward movement takes place soon. (And by this we don't mean simply negotiations about negotiations; we mean the ending of the Occupation and the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state run by whomever the Palestinians choose.) In a secret telegram to Shamir, revealed in the Israeli press in late May, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Moshe Arad warned that the Israeli government is dramatically underestimating the erosion of support in the U.S.

Meanwhile, Iraqi threats and Palestinian terrorism combine to scare Israelis. And UN resolutions that single out Israel while ignoring the crimes of other regimes around the world only strengthen the siege mentality that gives credibility to the Israeli Right.

Israelis already feel isolated and unfairly shunned by the rest of the world. It only takes us further from the path of peace when we talk or act in ways that make it appear to Israelis that we don't understand the complexity of the situation, the culpability of the Palestinians for having helped create the mess in the first place, and the reasonableness of Jewish fear given the historical legacy of the twentieth century (not to mention the recent resurgence of anti-Semitism—the desecration of Jewish graveyards in Europe and the upsurge of anti-Semitic pronouncements by Russian nationalists). Those of us who think Israel's policies are deeply immoral and self-destructive need to speak with compassion and reject those who try to paint a picture that places all the "evil" or blame on the Israelis, and leaves all the morality and victimization with the Palestinians. So when I found myself on a national TV news program in late May (just prior to the speedboat attack), instead of criticizing Israeli policy outright, as I had intended to do, I wound up defending Israel against a one-sided attack from an Arab American spokesman.

Compassion cannot mean uncritical acceptance of immoral policies, be they Israeli or Palestinian. The bottom-line issue remains: the Palestinian people must be granted national self-determination without compromising Israeli military security. It is in Israel's interest to achieve a settlement quickly, not to endlessly stall or find "good reasons" to perpetuate the status quo. Anyone who uses the terrorist attacks as an excuse for breaking off the pressure for direct negotiations and forward movement on the peace process is doing Israel a grave disservice.

Talking About the Forbidden

Every community has its taboos; liberals and progressives are no exception. For us, the unmentionable is the pathologies of the oppressed. Dare to talk about the alleged pathologies of Blacks, Jews, women, gays, or any other group that has suffered or is currently suffering the effects of oppression, and you risk being read out of the community. Presumably those we want to enlist as friends would be too confused if they heard about any defects in the communities of the oppressed; so we need to keep this information to ourselves and denounce it as "racist," "sexist," or some other "-ist" to anyone who raises these issues.

The problem is that people are not so dumb—they often recognize that the liberals and progressives are not telling the whole story. Moreover, they soon get the message that liberals have little respect for ordinary people, whom they suspect would too easily fall into racism or sexism with the slightest provocation. So, rather than reinforcing loyalty, keeping a tight lip actually drives away potential allies who distrust the Left for its condescension.

Conversely, the Right gains credibility because it's willing to say some of the taboo things about oppressed groups. It's precisely this "truth-telling" that allows the Right to draw illegitimate conclusions that really are sexist or racist.

So, there are some good reasons to avoid any discussion of pathologies of the oppressed. For one thing, every ascribed pathology is usually a wild overgeneralization that unfairly lumps people together. For another, most pathologies are usually adaptive responses to conditions of oppression; and without telling the whole story of the history that caused the adaptation, one seems to be validating the notion that there is something inherently wrong with the oppressed. This results in a kind of blaming the victim that gives aid and succor to the oppressors.

Take the "JAP" stereotype in all its racist ugliness.

A Hebrew-Language Version of Tikkun?

Many Israelis have been urging us to put out a Hebrew-language version of the magazine. Some of the articles would be translations from the English version, some would be written specifically for the Israeli edition. At present we have no money for the project, but much interest, and we're looking for people who could volunteer time to help us with: translating articles from English to Hebrew, raising money from donors or foundations in the U.S., publicizing and building circulation in Israel, or working in the Israel office. Volunteers only—there's no money yet available for this project!

Tikkun Interns

Tikkun interns needed for Sept. 1990–June 1991. Interns do the full range of *Tikkun* activities, from editing, proofreading, and reading incoming manuscripts to phone solicitations, leafletting, mailing, and other office chores. Minimum 25 hrs./wk., no pay.

To apply, write a detailed, self-revealing letter plus suggestions and comments on the magazine to Michael Lerner, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619.

What is so infuriating about this stereotype is that we all know that it has, in some cases, a kind of descriptive power. There really are people who fit at least some aspects of the stereotype. What makes the stereotype racist and sexist is that it seeks to explain the behavior as a function of the fact that these people are women and that they are Jewish. The truth is that the same behavior can be found in men and in non-Jews, and there is no particular reason to believe that it is *more* prevalent amongst Jewish women than amongst any other group similarly situated in the American economy.

But to refuse even to look at the stereotype and imagine that it is sometimes an accurate account of reality makes it impossible for us to ask what kinds of conditions in daily life foster this set of personality traits. This questioning might then help us understand the way that Jewish women were forced out of the world of production and into narrowly confining roles in family life, and how they were encouraged by a consumer society to believe that the fulfillment they were denied through the exercise of their intelligence and strength could now be found only in the shopping mall. Similarly, stereotypes about Jewish men and money, African-Americans and crime, and other groups and their pathologies often contain a germ of truth that, when properly understood, helps us see the specific way in which a group has been oppressed and then internalized that oppression, sometimes in self-destructive ways.

Don't get us wrong here. We detest the "JAP" jokes and stereotypes, and we're sorry that we allowed a classified ad to proclaim that the advertiser was "not a JAP." Yet we also feel that a healthy progressive movement could afford to acknowledge the part of the stereotypes that is correct and then begin to understand the ways that oppressed peoples themselves are deformed by the process of oppression.

This kind of conversation rarely takes place amongst liberals or progressives, because acknowledging any element of rationality in, say, white people's resentments of Blacks seems to be opening the door to unrestrained racism.

What makes having this kind of conversation so hard? Why do liberals and progressives fall into this denial? One part of the explanation is this: Like everyone else in this society, those who participate in social change movements often feel inadequate about themselves; they are engaged in a set of activities to hide this fact from themselves and assure themselves that they are perfectly fine. Part of the process of self-reassurance is to identify with a cause that is 100 percent pure and perfect, that does not risk having within it the ambiguities and uncertainties that people secretly feel about themselves. Just as the Right deals with this kind of pain by projecting the absolute purity of the innocent fetus and the sanctity of the U.S. flag, many people in the liberal world project a similar purity onto the victims of oppression. This dynamic is dramatically reinforced by members of the minority or oppressed groups, who compensate for the massive dose of societal negation they have received by insisting that their liberal supporters utter a litany that asserts how wonderful the oppressed really are. Fearful that they will be denounced as racists or sexists or anti-Semites, the liberals join in a celebration of the oppressed and a fervent denial of the very problems that they and everyone else know to be real.

The solution here is for liberals and progressives to learn to accept their own inner imperfections more fully—allowing ourselves to know that we are all badly scarred and wounded by growing up in a competitive and sexist society, and that we have all participated in our own self-deformations. If we could accept that about ourselves, we would have less of a fear of finding that those causes we support, like the struggles to end sexism and racism, are full of people who are, like us, radically imperfect.

If we could honestly face our own weaknesses and distortions, as well as the weaknesses and distortions of the various oppressed groups whose causes we espouse, we would be able to connect more powerfully with others whom we seek to enlist in our struggles. If we built a movement that could acknowledge that both we and those oppressed groups whose interests we champion are composed of people who are flawed and know that they are, it would be easier for others, who know themselves to be flawed as well, to join us. In liberal and progressive politics, the most powerful weapon we have is our unflinching commitment to the truth in all its complexity. □

The Patriarchs

Jay Cantor

Modern Disasters/Postmodern Despair

The New Man—those words, spoken in this century by so many tyrants, martyrs, and dreamers, by Mao, by Che Guevara, by Futurist artists and surrealist poets, by all who wished to announce that a new heaven and a new earth would require and produce a new humanity—those words now cast an ominous shadow on the names of Marx, and Nietzsche, and Freud, the patriarchs of the tribes of the modern. It has often seemed to me, these last fifteen years or so, as if the interrogations and projects for our redemption given by these patriarchs—and they were *patriarchal* indeed—had ended, chilled by that shadow. For many, the modern epoch, as these men apprehended it, had concluded—or they wished it had—earlier than a mere fifteen years ago. But how, outside their directives, are we to work through our bewilderments?

No, conservatives would say, the question should be, how are we going to repair the damage the patriarchs' ideas have done? By studying Socrates, says one. By dismantling the overweening state, says another. By intoning the pledge of allegiance, or repeating the words "family values." But simply to wish that the modern project, as these men each inflected it, was over, having ended in failure or tyranny, means, usually, that one's thinking comes not truly after the patriarchs' questions but as if one lived before they needed to be asked. The conservative philosophers and politicians have not really replied to, but rather repressed or ignored, the questions these men still pose. To find the answers is still our necessary work.

Humanity, the patriarchs said, in the absence (or silence) of God, makes itself, even at the most basic of levels; and—though each would put our hands on a different lever—each thought we must re-make ourselves in order to meet the challenge of our new possibilities for productive work and for self-destruction, to fulfill (or, in Nietzsche's case, truly to overcome) our need for connectedness, for satisfying community. Perhaps only such a new community (or an "overman") might intertwine eros with death so that life might continue.

I don't think that the need for their projects is really over. Even now our nervous systems are newly extended by computer networks; and, by gene splicing, humanity physically reshapes itself. So the patriarchs' questions continue to trouble me: *Can we direct our making?* Should this re-making be left to the hidden hand of the market place—supposing there *is* such a hidden hand, that the market's many greedy fingers aren't impelled by advertising, by already existing power? Couldn't that power truly be more democratically dispersed? Or made wise (so ask Freud and Nietzsche) in some other, nobler way?

We are afraid now both of our instructive ecstasies and our foolish excess, and uncertain anymore that we can tell the difference.

Or should we be satisfied by the piecemeal workings of the entrepreneurial imagination? Responding to any demand for a new social imagination—whether thought of as a community activity, or as the work of solitary makers—the market instead offers "lifestyles" to purchase, a kitful of products along with narratives that give the goods glamour and meaning. Discussing a fantasy styled by advertisers substitutes for the imaginative work, the communal conversation, that makes foundational metaphors for a society.

Do we even care? Or perhaps we think that to search out transformative communal fantasies, vivid with our hidden desires, will only make matters worse. A passivity before the great god of fashion, the god *that which happens,* gives an air at once desperate and enervated to much contemporary painting or narrative or critique. This feeling, of an old dispensation ended, of an interregnum time (but without hope of the new) is often the weather of the "postmodern." Postmodernism sometimes seems an historical term, and sometimes a trademark, but what *I* mean by it here is a despairing irony toward the modern projects (and delineating flavors of irony is

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a crucial postmodern botany, for some ironies strengthen, and some poison), a fairly comfortable condo-ized despair. There is, said former President Carter, a malaise in the land. We listened; and changed; changed the channel, anyway. But perhaps he was right. And I don't think the malaise has passed with our new prosperity.

I try to remember what channel we were on when the malaise began. Was it, for me, in 1975, when the United States left Vietnam—Operation Eagle Pull—our diplomats and their families rising from the Embassy roof, with Vietnamese holding onto the struts of the helicopters? The North Vietnamese Army advanced and a wave of refugees poured in front of them, fleeing—but from where to where? In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, furious, insane, silent, took over Phnom Penh, cleared the city, even the hospital rooms, made the inhabitants march to their death in the countryside. The patriarchs' theories, which so many intellectuals had imagined would account for our history and guide our re-creation of our selves and our world, were, it began to seem, unlivable, tyrannical, paltry, inadequate, deceptive, and, finally, terrifying.

That I still remain attached to their projects marks me as from the "sixties"—part vintage, part brand name—member of a generation whose ideas and actions had a great deal about them of a costume show (that is, we sometimes acted as if the Administration Building was the Czar's Winter Palace); of the grandiose (at worst we thought the whole world was watching, was about to join us; at best we thought we were about to join the world); of the misguided; perhaps even, critics say, of the duplicitous. Was the movement self-deceived from the first? Did we want the war in Vietnam over, or just the draft that threatened us? I think there is no question that Allan Bloom, for example, in his almost hysterical critique of that decade, is wrong: we wanted the war over. In fact the sixties were for most people working against the Vietnam War a time of dark, often inappropriate but very palpable guilt. Perhaps the antiwar activists were not as willing to be tried on conspiracy charges, jailed, beaten, or killed as their critics now wish they had been—if they were to show *proper* seriousness. And compared to the history of the union movement or the civil rights movement, and most certainly in comparison to the violence of the war itself, those dangers were, in fact, slight. But a good part of what caused the movement against the Vietnam War, and the broader movement for justice of which it was a part, to trickle to an end, as I remember, was not simply that our self-interest had been met with the end of the draft, or that (as was indeed the case) our vision of justice—of a world re-made—was often muddy and not about to convince our fellow citizens. In addition, we were afraid of the force we faced and the kinds of violence (legal and otherwise) that it might unleash; and we were all too easily bewildered by the state's many efforts to confuse the Left—to infiltrate and subvert and incite us to stupid and destructive actions. Terrified, we often rended each other.

But there was moral feeling as well as moralism in our actions, compassion as well as disguised ambition in the people I knew who demonstrated to end the war. And there was, too, a sense that ordinary social life could be—and, given the world's new resources of violence, must be—very different from what we had experienced (in an admittedly limited way) before. There was, in our marches, moratoriums, sit-ins, poster-making, leafletting, a taste of shared enterprises, of trying to make sense of the world for the first time—new to us Mirandas!—of grasping, at least intellectually, the forces that made us; there was a taste of conviviality, and community. Bloom, in his *The Closing of the American Mind*—his own mind haunted to the point of closure by irresponsible Black students at Cornell foolishly, dangerously, holding rifles—remembers this as a defiantly and disgustingly anti-intellectual time.

My own experience as a student was directly contrary to Bloom's description. We were desperate (perhaps, indeed, too desperate) for knowledge, for understanding. We had been born into a world capable of holocausts of efficient mechanized savagery, Nazi assembly lines of death, a time capable of ending time in a nuclear flash-boom, an economy engaged in prodigies of sublime space flight, of distance-annihilating communication; we were citizens of a nation with the privileges and horrors of empire. Yet it seemed that we lacked the political imagination to re-form ourselves and our polity to control our new possibilities of community, or our new resources of violence—resources that might better shape the world, or destroy others, or cause us to die ourselves. We lacked, sometimes, even the concepts to acknowledge our situation. Our intellectual heroes, like Herbert Marcuse, or my own teacher, Norman O. Brown, were, Bloom feels, misguided choices, and Bloom is caustic in his contempt toward these and others of his intellectual superiors, artists and writers like Mary McCarthy, or Louis Armstrong. (These ill-chosen targets are, as he says, stand-ins for the real villains, Marx, and Freud, and Nietzsche.)

I remember that time, too, as a sleepless, brooding, anxious period—one must not be, in the words we inappropriately, hyperbolically used at the time, "a good German." That guilt toward the war's victims—Vietnamese and Americans—clouded our vision and distorted our actions. One felt guilty toward the Vietnamese, and toward the mostly working-class Americans who were fighting the war on behalf of ... well, here

opinions differed. Whose war was it? A mistake by the foreign policy community, the best and the brightest? A piece of imperial geopolitics; a move against the Soviets or the Chinese? Part of what we desperately wanted for our project was the answer to those questions, so that our nation might not make this mistake—and was it a *mistake*?—again. Vietnam seemed not truly a war *for* the Vietnamese, but against them. And a war whose heaviest price was paid by the Vietnamese and by the American poor and the American working class.

A duplicitous re-writing of this time, and of the movement against the war, has already occurred, so that harder questions of what created the war needn't be answered. Instead, ever-present class resentments are used to create a tasty, emotionally satisfying version of our defeat: the privileged, middle-class, antiwar protesters are remembered as savage toward the American soldiers, holding them guilty of war crimes, destroying their morale. (There is an honest rendering of the sour stew of emotions that such deception feeds on in John Updike's reminiscences of his feelings during the sixties, an essay in his book *Self-Consciousness*.) In fact, few movement people who were involved in thinking through the causes of the war were so insane as to think that the *soldiers* were the cause; they knew that the soldiers acted, usually honorably, often heroically, within a larger madness that they had not created, but which might make them and their comrades victims.

For some, the tragi-comical, grandiose, and overblown aspects of our actions against the war—our songs, our profanity, our costume show, even our yippie nihilism—discredit the movement. Our foolish, theatrical irony is easily lampooned by writers like Bloom. We were Cagney, shouting "Top of the world, Ma!" in *White Heat*—not an actual gangster, but Cagney. We lacked, according to Bloom, the "European" seriousness of "true" nihilism. Perhaps whatever else our actions were, they were *also* always comical, and that in itself I don't find regrettable or intellectually dishonest. Bloom misses much of what's vital in American culture, including the particular sort of American irony that allows Americans to mean very seriously what's jokingly said.

That antic quality often, it seems to me, opened into a different idea of what political action and community should feel like. (Perhaps it was of a piece, too, with our youth and the slight level of risk we ran in this prosperous and usually forgiving country.) Our community was, in part, "Hey Judy, I've got a barn, let's put on a show!" partaking of that deceptive, charmingly vulgar Hollywood sweetness, that tingly feeling of being on stage. We were a Pepsi Generation—or, in Jean-Luc Godard's phrase, "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola"—of ideology and television and film, an image-irradiated group



of people. No wonder we saw ourselves first of all in terms provided for us by the mass culture that had, from childhood on, helped make us up. No wonder, too, that as the war dragged on we distorted ourselves in order to have our antiwar show renewed by the TV news, so that we could make other people up. But that double vision of ourselves, that we were "playing," using provocative "costumes" and chants, like numbers in a musical comedy, that vision was ours as well as our critics', and gave one an empowering self-mockery (another flavor of irony!) that can come from seeing oneself in the guise of figures from popular culture. It's a very American ability.

But this once-saving irony—that you can understand that it's all a show, while still participating—has itself become part of the American spectacle. Our postmodern irony produces a new combination of roles: spectator and enervated, passive director. That sense that one is backstage, like a director, is another way that one is now made to feel "special," different from the rubes who don't understand how they're manipulated. But we're still manipulated. We didn't even have to see through the way the candidates fooled us in the presidential election just past. The TV commentators did the seeing-through for us, made taking us backstage a part of the spectacle, told us how "spin doctors" worked to influence the reporting, analyzed the psychic buttons pushed by the candidates' television commercials. One became, then, an *ironic* voter—an individual supposedly different from the mass, by virtue of the seeing-through that the mass media themselves provided. A new species of Nietzscheanism was born: yes, we see that there is only aesthetics, only lies, and so we consciously value the most artful lie—even the lie, perhaps, that we are somehow different from the masses because of our aesthetic appreciation of lies! Hey, why kick—that's show biz! that's entertainment! Yet the buttons were still pushed, and the levers eventually pulled.

The winking gaiety of the sixties seems a different variety of irony, one that was still part of a show that we (barely, barely) made rather than simply watched. Our sense of experimentation, the sense, very American indeed, of *possibility* and play seemed precious to me at the time. But now the dangers press into memory as well. Possibility for what? (Even the patients dragging their IVs were forced to leave Phnom Penh to die on the road as part of the Khmer Rouge's "Final Solution.") And again a different sort of irony seeps through the postmodern despair. Why *not* just lean back in one's seat, and enjoy the entertainment—if you try to participate in history, to change the world, you'll only make matters worse! It is, I think, the wreck of our "sixties" hopes, our "modern" project for transformation, and the ensuing distrust of ourselves, that has given rise to much of the current postmodern irony. We are afraid now both of our instructive ecstasies and our foolish excess, and uncertain anymore that we can tell the difference. We can't quite surrender our memory of the sometimes terrifying pleasures of the sixties, the near unhingement that can come from the sense of a world and a self that can and must necessarily be remade. Yet we're unable to shoulder the task again, uncertain, even, if we should. All this forms itself into uneasy amalgams of self-dislike and icy angry contempt, of cynicism (hey, I'm no rube!) and nostalgia.

To overcome such postmodern despair, I return to the patriarchs' work, for I find, as I think most people do who directly confront these patriarchs, something profound, complicated, and salutary in their attempts to go to the root of our unhappiness, something invigorating as well as frightening in their anger and their hopefulness, when, rightly or wrongly, they imagine a world and a self transformed. Their expectations, even the dour Freud's hopes, are, to our current taste, hyperbolic at best and menacing at worst.

Is there a way to savor and be fed by that hopefulness without being misled into foolishness or tyranny? Did the collapse of their projects mean the finale, too, of the hopes they represented? Does the collapse of Marxism mean there is no grand community possible, little chance for a collective dialogue about our own making, that this is the best of all possible worlds? Does Nietzsche's embrace by the Fascists (and the aspects of his thought that made this death grip possible) mean that we must be suspicious of our own possibilities for ecstatic action, for salutary tragedy? Does the sour careerism of the psychoanalytic profession mean that we cannot have (at the least) clear vision, or (at most, or at maddest) a transformed thought, a "reason of the heart," enriched at each moment by the symbolic dimension of our lives? Can we find a new language convivially to discuss our true needs? Can we feel a connection with nature, the body of the world, that will encourage a less wasteful, less angry relation to the world that supports and co-creates us?

So I reread my own past by the light of the patriarchs' texts, and I allow my past, and its bewilderments, to interrogate their works.

Rereading the Past

The war in Vietnam was the event that bore down on my generation, twining into its awful majesty the more distant traumas of the atomic bomb, and the dark rumor of the Holocaust (in part, the rumor that racism might end in genocide). Perhaps the way these previous blows were intertwined by Vietnam was unfortunate, each distorting the others (so that we sometimes confused the Vietnam War with genocide). But their combination also gave an added urgency to the several causes, formed them into one garment, weaved them into the "Movement."

The war forced Marx's work on one's attention—even if one eventually rejected that work as not of our weather—because Marx was, ostensibly, the way the Communist forces in Vietnam made sense of their world. If what one was told about the war by our leaders seemed false, perhaps the contrary view was the true one?

What one finds first in Marx—from the earliest *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and on throughout his work—is a prescient critique of the rapacious individual that the capitalist economy creates, and of capitalism's formation, or deformation, of community, of politics, art, and morality, even of love. Marx's work is a prophet's outcry against our universal anti-value money, whose corrosive power confounds all qualities, making the untalented seem talented (isn't "he who has power over the talented ... more talented than the talented"?), the ugly seem beautiful ("I can buy for myself the most *beautiful* of women. Therefore I am not *ugly,* for the effect of *ugliness*—its deterrent power—is nullified by money.") and the unlovable loved. Marx is describing the poisonous drug As If: for when the Lord of Capital looks at his "trophy wife," does he *really* feel attractive in her mirror-eyes, or does he feel it is *as if* she loved *him*? (And when the poison spreads inwardly, isn't it as if he feels that it is as if she loved him?) Soon it infects even our simpler lives and we, too, feel that it's *as if* the high-priced doctor *cares* for us, the professor lives to educate us, till mostly we only know, and so come to accept, *as if* concern, *as if* love.

Marx, of course, overstates; his angry irony is often so broad as to be an almost mechanical enumerative overkill. His prose tries to match what he finds to be the

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Soviet Prospects, Jewish Fears

Alan Snitow

In the final scene of *Jewish Cemetery,* the first feature film by Soviet Jews about their lives under glasnost, Jewish activist Roman Spector goes to Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to say goodbye to one of his best friends, a fellow activist who is making aliya with his family. The friend's departure for Israel is clearly a victory, but the film doesn't end when the family passes through security. Instead, the camera follows Spector as he turns away to head home.

Looking anguished, Spector faces the cameraman and demands a cigarette for the trip back to Moscow. His friend's victory is his loss; Spector is staying to rebuild Jewish life in the Soviet Union and to participate in a broad democratic movement to transform Soviet society. But, as I learned on my recent trips to the Soviet Union to help organize the Jewish Film Festival in Moscow, Soviet Jewish participation in these historic projects is once again having to take a back seat to a new movement for emigration.

The current period of emigration is different from that of the 1970s. That earlier campaign for emigration was an effort to free those who had already freed themselves in spirit. The refuseniks demanded their emigration rights from a dictatorial regime bent on repressing all expression of Soviet Jewish life. While the refuseniks waited, they organized underground Jewish communities and became the center of Jewish renewal in the USSR even as they prepared to leave it. "Now," says Spector, "in perestroika time, we decided to leave the underground and demand our social institutions."

This past December, 160 Jewish groups from 75 cities met in Moscow to found the Confederation of Jewish Organizations and Communities of the USSR, known as the Va'ad. This is an effort not only to define themselves as a diaspora community, but also to participate in the broader movement by all national, religious, and social groups to change a monochromatic society, creating what one activist called "a future which is multicultural, multi-colored."

Unavoidably, there is tension between this ideal and the emigration effort. The refuseniks who did not get out in the seventies are almost all gone now to the U.S. and Israel, and a new generation of émigrés is lining up to leave. This time the Soviet Jewish movement, free to operate in public, must support people who are for the most part less interested in Jewish identity than in flight from anti-Semitism, economic instability, and an uncertain future.

Built by would-be émigrés who were forced to stay, the Soviet Jewish renewal movement finds itself functioning as a service and advocacy agency for Jews who are departing fast and leaving little behind to build on. One by one the movement's potential base and actual leaders disappear through the doors of airport security. Spector has good reason to be depressed, even if freer emigration is a sign of the movement's success.

Out of a Jewish population variously estimated at between 1.8 and 7 million, over a million Soviet Jews have asked Israel for visas to immigrate to the Jewish state, according to Operation Exodus, the United Jewish Appeal's $420 million three-year fund-raising effort. Ten thousand arrived there in April alone. That's almost as many as in all of 1989. Half a million Soviet Jews have applied to emigrate to the U.S., a figure limited not by desire—for most Soviet Jews, the U.S. is their first choice—but by law: the U.S. will now accept only 50,000 Soviets a year (a figure that also includes Armenians, Pentecostals, and other Soviet émigrés).

"My views have changed in the last six months," said David Waksberg, a dedicated American activist for Soviet Jewry and vice president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry in the U.S. "Until February, I was pushing Soviet Jewish renewal, and I still am, but in my mind now it's clear to me there's a critical mass, a majority who are intending to depart.... The most important priority is to prepare for the departure."

A key element of that preparation is support for the resettlement of tens of thousands of Jews in a country that was founded to gather in the Jewish people but which is far from able to support, house, educate, and employ them.

The Soviet Jewish leaders who are intent on staying in the USSR actively support the émigré movement even as they struggle to maintain a space for the development of an independent national Jewish culture. "For us, for Jewish activists," says Spector, "there are no

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contradictions between those who want to stay and those who want to leave."

Even though Soviet Jewish activists are working to maintain that unity, it is being undermined by Jewish establishments in the U.S. and Israel, both of which want an exclusive focus on emigration. Operation Exodus, for example, is earmarked to support émigré resettlement in Israel and the United States. Ghastly stories of Soviet anti-Semitism and images of the Holocaust are central to its campaign, the largest American Jewish mobilization since the Yom Kippur War.

American Jews are being given caricatures instead of clarity of vision, and the issue of Soviet anti-Semitism is a major part of the distorting lens.

In my view, the exploitation of Holocaust imagery in this campaign is misleading and inaccurate. Soviet Jews face a difficult struggle against an anti-Semitism that is deeply rooted in Russian and Soviet culture. Given this legacy, few would be surprised if there were to be isolated incidents of physical attacks on Jews by right-wing nationalists in the Russian republic or by anti-Russian ultranationalists in other parts of the USSR. Despite the Soviet government's renunciation of official anti-Semitism and pledges to prosecute attacks on Jews, there are still overt expressions of anti-Semitism in the press and in public discourse. But the use of Holocaust imagery to describe these real threats suggests incorrectly that the struggle against anti-Semitism cannot be fought and won. It *can* be fought and *must* be won.

Instead, the Holocaust imagery so widespread in the U.S. says more about fund-raising in the Jewish community than it does about the crisis of Soviet Jewry.

Last November, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency quoted Simcha Dinitz, chair of the World Zionist Organization–Jewish Agency Executive, as saying that an atmosphere of crisis was necessary to improve on the poor results of last year's resettlement fund-raising campaign, called Passage to Freedom. "Jews react to a crisis more than a challenge," said Dinitz. Resettling tens of thousands of Soviet Jews "is a challenge, not a crisis. People react to happy challenges differently."

The idea of Soviet Jewish emigration as a "happy challenge" is long gone. Likewise gone is all talk of Soviet Jewish renewal, another idea that contradicts the fund-raising line that Soviet Jews not only *want* to leave, but *must* leave to survive.

If they have a real option to stay, then it's not a "rescue." If money goes to support renewal, if renewal is even acknowledged as a serious possibility, then some American Jews might start to question the idea that a Soviet Jewish holocaust is imminent or that the door could close at any time.

Despite the reasonable fear that Soviet Jews will be settled in the occupied territories, the Soviet government has thus far resisted pressure to close the emigration door. This countervailing information is ignored. It undermines the line of the Operation Exodus campaign.

The question here is not "Should American Jews support the resettlement effort?" It is, rather, "Should Operation Exodus ignore and even undermine the effort at renewal?"

Va'ad President Mikhail Chlenov has long maintained that a "single Jewish national movement" was necessary to "reorient the concept of the Jewish problem" and to pursue "Jewish salvation in its totality" for Soviet Jewry. That totality included free emigration as the top priority, but it also aimed at "perpetuating Soviet Jewish existence" and opposing the growth of anti-Semitism.

Earlier this year, leaders of the Va'ad proposed opening an independent office of their own in the United States to raise funds for this unified conception of their movement. The proposal was rejected by the United Jewish Agency (UJA), forcing the American supporters of the idea to form a low-profile and underfunded American Friends of the Va'ad group out of a dentist's office in Riverdale, New Jersey. The UJA even opposed plans by the Union of Councils on Soviet Jewry to raise funds for their soon-to-be-opened office in Moscow to advocate emigration and assist Soviet Jews who are resisting anti-Semitism. Apparently, such efforts would conflict with the drive to raise money for resettlement in Israel. Some of these efforts could also undermine a demand for unity, a demand often used to chill dissent.

Soviet Jewish leaders I have interviewed over the past two years seem to feel that many American Jews have little appreciation or respect for the dual effort of the Va'ad. They expressed the desire to change the relationship between American and Soviet Jewry from, as Chlenov puts it, "paternalism to partnership."

To be fair, American paternalism toward Soviet activists isn't confined to American and Soviet Jews. Elena Zelinskaya, a non-Jewish Soviet journalist and democratic activist from Leningrad, told me:

> All American people now love Russians. When I was in the United States, I felt like a pet. It was very funny. I am a very different person than they see. I have very hard work here in Leningrad, a very hard life.... If here in the Soviet Union, we continue to

> live as we have in the past, we will continue to be very dangerous to the whole world.... It's true we need Western help right now, and the help must be without any illusions. You must help us like you would a very ill person. We must build relationships with you with open eyes.

Sadly, American Jews are being given caricatures instead of clarity of vision, and the issue of Soviet anti-Semitism, a key symptom of the Soviet illness, is a major part of the distorting lens. Although many Soviet Jews will emigrate, Soviet Jewry will remain the world's third-largest Jewish community, a long-repressed community stripped of institutions with which to defend itself against anti-Semitism. In a recent speech in New York, Sam Norich of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research said that even though Soviet Jews are not looking to build Russian Jewish life as of old (when it was the center of world Jewish life), they "at least can pick up on our traditions and develop life that gives them the inner strength they need to contend with what they have to."

The Jewish Film Festival this past March in Moscow was a contribution to that cause and showed that a more optimistic prognosis may be justified. The festival was the largest Jewish cultural event in Soviet history. Over an eight-day period, fifty thousand people, Jews and non-Jews, came to see thirty feature films from eight countries. Twenty-two of the filmmakers came as well. Although millions of Soviet people would have seen or heard television and radio reports on the event, there was not a single anti-Semitic demonstration or incident.

Yet when I returned to the United States in time for Passover, I found this good news was being ignored. The issue had been framed as an impending holocaust, and no contrary information was allowed. At home in Oakland, I found an Operation Exodus haggada and a cover letter which stated, "In 1939, the world did not take seriously the threat created by raging anti-Semitism and nationalism in Europe—the same forces now being unleashed against Soviet Jews in 1990."

I believe the threat from anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union is serious, but the analogy of today's Soviet Union and Nazi Germany seems to me not only inaccurate and wrongheaded but also a serious miscalculation. It justifies passivity about Jewish renewal and allows Americans to write off as irrational and unrescuable those Jews who don't leave the USSR. It portrays the Jews as existentially alone in the world, outsiders who fear for their future and are unable to trust anyone else enough to make common cause with them. Roman Spector told us: "I am sick of seeing stories about anti-Semitism in the Western press. Why isn't the press covering the real story, which is Jewish revival here in the Soviet Union?"

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On May 5, the date that anti-Semites in Russia had reportedly planned pogroms against the Jews, the *New York Times* printed an op-ed piece by Irina Ginzberg, a Soviet Jewish novelist living in Moscow. "The Jews are in danger," she wrote. "The Russians demand the death of the Jews, demand that they be forbidden to occupy any leadership posts, to defend their dissertations. . . ."

From dissertations to death is quite a leap. There were no pogroms on May 5, but the more important issue raised by Ginzberg's diatribe is, Who are "the Russians" she writes of? Ginzberg's paranoia allows for no distinctions. All Russians become stereotypical biological anti-Semites, the necessary counterpart to the stereotypical "Jew as eternal victim"—as if there were no resources for Soviet Jews to draw on, no inner strength, no outside allies, no objective political changes.

The Ginzberg op-ed is the most extreme case of a discourse aimed at driving American Jewry to view anti-Semitic groups like Pamyat as the inevitable victor and the Jews as people trapped in a cycle of victimization. But other examples abound. In one of his *New York Times* columns, William Safire wrote that the Bush administration's support for the Mideast peace process is bad for Soviet Jews:

> Come the first pogrom . . . who in the Bush administration will accept responsibility for failing to facilitate the new exodus while there was still time?
>
> Who among supporters of Israel will step forward on some future Passover and admit that they were so caught up with the "peace process" that they refused to confront the real possibility of a death process?

This sort of hyperbole never needs much verification. Its inspiration is McCarthyite. Any attack on Soviet Jews will now release the wrath of wistful would-be witch hunters.

A more subtle example of herd journalism was the coverage of an American Jewish Committee survey of Muscovites' attitudes toward Jews. Headlines in the *New York Jewish Week* and the *New York Times* referred respectively to the "anti-Semitic climate" and "high level of anti-Jewish feeling" in the USSR. In fact, results of the survey were a very mixed bag, indicating the expected prejudice and ignorance but also a surprising amount of tolerance. This latter, unexpected news didn't make it high up in the stories.

The *Times* coverage, for example, repeats the information that 23 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that "Jews have too much influence over Russian culture." (One wonders what numbers a similar survey would yield in the U.S.) Only at the very end of the article are the following findings listed: 91 percent said Jews should decide for themselves whether to stay or emigrate; 90 percent agreed that the government should insure equal educational opportunity for Jews; 88 percent said Jews should have equal employment.

My point here is not to dismiss Soviet anti-Semitism but to say that the issue is being framed in a deceptive and self-defeating manner that reduces American Jewish solidarity with Soviet Jews to support for emigration. In the emotional upsurge of the campaign for that support, the movement for Soviet Jewish renewal is left to its own limited devices.

When in the Soviet Union, I talked to many Jews who were indeed terrified of anti-Semitism. The old guarantees of a repressive but predictable society are now gone. Like their Russian brethren, the Jews have no experience with democracy and little knowledge of how to organize to defend themselves. They feel exposed.

One Jewish activist in Leningrad was caught in a terrible dilemma. He and his wife were afraid of pogroms and sent their youngest child out of the city for safety. They wanted to emigrate to the U.S., but he was afraid to apply because he could lose his job. At sixty years of age, he is a successful writer and a member of the Communist Party—not from conviction, but because that was the only way to get good work. The final Catch-22: How does a party member convince American officials that he faces persecution as a Jew and should be accepted as a refugee?

Another story: A well-known Jewish film critic very seriously asks the Jewish Film Festival directors what it means to be Jewish. Later, her forty-year-old son takes the directors aside to ask their help in emigrating because he fears anti-Semitism.

Everyone returns with such stories. Many Jewish people want to leave, but Jewish activists say this desire is now less often based on a clear sense of Jewish identity than on the lack of such identity.

Boris Kelman, an eleven-year refusenik and leader of the Jewish community in Leningrad, told me,

> People who are insecure about their definition of themselves as Jews confront the current instability with fear. . . . This is the first time many people have heard anti-Semitic words. They are afraid. I am not afraid because I'm not insecure about my identity.

His self-confidence came after years in refusal, during which time he learned to accept his "natural appearance."

These people face a difficult struggle, but there is an important core of activists who face it with courage and pride. Paradoxically, the lack of American Jewish support may push these activists into exactly the kind of alliances

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Moscow Diary

Deborah Kaufman

The idea to take the Jewish Film Festival to Moscow began early in 1988 with the presentation, at the annual Summer Festival in the San Francisco Bay Area, of a group of Soviet-made films with Jewish subjects. The main goal in sponsoring the Moscow Festival was to reach out to all those in the Soviet Union interested in Jewish life around the world.

The Moscow Festival followed the creation of a national Soviet Jewish Council in December 1989 and took place in the context of the enormous political change that is sweeping the Soviet Union (see Alan Snitow, "Soviet Prospects, Jewish Fears," this issue). With thirty-one contemporary films from eight countries, the Festival would be the first event of its kind and would work toward ending the historic suppression of Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

The sun is rising in Moscow. The sky opens up into light, crows caw, trams roll over wet tracks, and the gold plating on the onion domes of the churches begins to shine. In the daylight you can see immense monolithic buildings, including one across the river, built in the 1920s to look like a tractor when seen from an airplane.

We learn that the Jewish Film Festival has been canceled by a couple of reactionary anti-Semites on the Moscow City Council. Our Soviet cosponsors, the American Soviet Film Initiative (ASK), suggest that we move the Moscow Festival to Tblisi, capital of Soviet Georgia. I smoke a lot of cigarettes. Leaders of the Jewish Cultural Association acknowledge that we're being screwed, but beg us not to believe the exaggerated stories we've heard of anti-Semitism and impending pogroms. My Armenian translator tells me, "You can't sing rock and roll in Russian," as if to imply that this is a culture that doesn't have it in itself to rebel.

We know we have very little time to turn the City Council's decision around and so begin contacting everyone we can in power: we call members of the Congress of People's Deputies and U.S. Embassy staff who then call the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the international press. Our story goes out over the wires. We attend a reception at the U.S. Embassy and meet Sergei Stankevich and Fyodor Berlotsky, both members of the Congress of People's Deputies; they promise to help. American "experts" keep telling me about this culture of brinkmanship, of passivity, of cynicism, but I know we can win if we fight.

We meet with the head of the Cinematographers' Union and the head of ASK, Rustam Ibragimbekov, who is Moslem and a member of the Congress of People's Deputies from Baku, Azerbaijan. We keep making phone calls. The City Council finally gives in under pressure from a coalition of people and organizations—most not Jewish—who now have history on their side.

On the way home we walk through Red Square singing the "Internationale" with more than a touch of hope, irony, and drunkenness.

There has been no publicity for the Festival and we are opening in two days. We call our Russian friends. Will they tell everyone they know? But, they tell me, everyone already knows everything. Somehow underground communication counts more than a column in *Pravda* or *Izvestia*. It's hard to believe this, coming, as we do, from a culture so dependent on the mass media for its information.

We work around the clock, talking, talking. The Jewish community is divided between the official Jews who worked with government approval before Gorbachev, and the new organizations of Jews who have until now been underground. The two groups hate each other. We try to work with as many of these groups as possible to avoid exclusivity. They express resentment at our choice to play the field, but their frustration is overcome by their desire to work with us—each Soviet Jewish organization wants to cosponsor either the Festival as a whole or a seminar, screening, or reception. They are hungry for us.

Everything seems completely disorganized. Four theaters will run our thirty films simultaneously from ten in the morning until midnight. We can't get a program schedule because there is not enough paper. We end up

Deborah Kaufman is the Director of the San Francisco Bay Area–based Jewish Film Festival.

faxing programs to ourselves to make copies. CBS-TV laughs when I call to ask if they have a Xerox machine—yes, but it's been broken for a year. There aren't spare parts, even at the hard-currency store.

People use words like "suffocating" to describe their lives. We hear that members of Fascist organizations are talking about our festival at Pushkin Square. We go to a "happening" at an art gallery called "dissident" by our taxi driver. The "happening" is an art show: Polaroid pictures of Romania's Ceaucescu being shot to death and a wall inscribed with the words, "Everything is all right." An avant-garde jazz trio plays an incredible forty-five-minute set with horns, heavy breathing, and some screaming. The mood is spontaneous, liberated. These are the contradictions in a chaotic Moscow.

Our posters had been "lost," but now they are "found." Visas for Israeli filmmakers had been impossible to obtain, but now they are forthcoming. Hundreds of people line up to buy tickets for our Festival. They are young and old, all sizes, shapes, and complexions. Our international delegation arrives—about twenty filmmakers and sixty other guests from America and Europe. On opening night the theaters are packed. There are no demonstrations. There is no fear. After all the stories of impending violence and after all of our problems with the Moscow City Council, we are surprised at the relaxed, casual atmosphere. War veterans, young couples, portly women, art students, and people who are simply curious linger around our theater lobbies. Audiences love the films. People are talking about the Festival as a "miracle." They are crowding around filmmakers to get autographs, to touch them, to tell them personal stories. Something amorphous, indescribable is happening. People are moved.

We run from theater to theater to introduce films and experience audience reactions. At a lengthy and exhausting press conference reporters ask a series of unusual questions: "Can you comment on the Jewish lobby in America?," "Would you say the 1917 Revolution was a Jewish Revolution?," and "What about your profits?" Anti-Semites and reactionaries are now saying Lenin was a Jew, that communism is a Jewish conspiracy. Leaders of the Jewish community come to give our delegation a briefing. They are full of contradictions and new information: There may be three to seven million Jews in the USSR. At most, 100,000 will leave each year. The leaders disagree with each other openly about what is the most important issue: the revival of Jewish life in the USSR, emigration, or staying to fight fascism.

Meanwhile in Moscow there are power shortages, the hot water at the hotel stops running, we encounter a steady stream of failed technology and long lines. But we attend the Academy Award presentations where somehow a satellite hook-up to Hollywood works long enough for people to sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" in Russian. We visit people's homes. After incredible generosity (much food and alcohol), we hear stories about relatives killed by Stalin. A national catharsis is taking place: people are talking about the dead. We hear stories of labor camps and stories of great filmmakers. Death and creativity. So much suffering, so much intimacy. It is wrenching.

We see a new documentary film on the Jewish community called *Jewish Cemetery* which is about, among other things, digging up mass graves and searching for appropriate ways to memorialize the dead. What is the meaning of a Jewish Film Festival that celebrates vitality in this context? Later on at one of the theaters a simultaneous translator rushes down from her booth to embrace me and tell me these films have changed her life. At another theater the manager begs us to come back next year.

The Jewish Cultural Association has organized a special evening at the Jewish Theater for us. It includes many speeches and some musical presentations of kitschy Yiddish music. The only acceptable form of Jewish culture before glasnost was shtetl nostalgia à la Sholom Aleichem. Though the Soviet Jewish revival is struggling for a new voice, they still haven't found a way to transform Tevye and his ilk into an authentic contemporary form. A long-haired man sings "My Yiddishe Mama" next to a boom box belting out symphonic pop. People clamor around us and give us small gifts. They want to know about Israel, America. Can we help them get out? Again we hear that the Festival is a miracle.

It is already closing night. Fifty thousand people have attended the Festival over the last eight days. At a closing-night party I look around me and see Soviet filmmakers with ponytails, Jews with yarmulkes, U.S. Embassy officials, TV cameras and newspeople, artists, musicians—"the intelligentsia," as it is called. We are all drinking too much vodka. Josh Waletzky, the director of two Festival films, grabs a microphone and sings Yiddish songs. The lights are low. Someone puts on music and people begin to dance. After years of isolation and passivity, all it takes is a film festival and some rock to get people to erupt into exuberant dance.

After the international delegation leaves Moscow, a few of us remain. On our last night we eat and drink with some of our Soviet co-workers from ASK. They make anti-Soviet jokes, I criticize the U.S. On the way home we walk through Red Square singing the "Internationale" with more than a touch of hope, irony, and drunkenness. They can't figure out how we know the words.

Back in America the media and Jewish establishment have interpreted much of what happened to us as a confirmation of growing anti-Semitism. They use this as another reason to push for emigration to Israel. But I would like to ask why it is necessary to opt for one choice—emigration—at the exclusion of others, such as fighting anti-Semitism and building a Jewish community. For the millions who choose to stay, isn't the emphasis on emigration undermining the potential for Jewish renewal there? Doesn't this focus on emigration abandon Soviet Jewish revival to the Orthodox who are busy establishing yeshivas while secular Jewish revival is stalled? Will emigration also undermine the potential for reformers in general? And if people want to leave, why can't they come to America, clearly their first choice? Why have American Jewish leaders agreed to stringent immigration quotas which keep Soviet Jews out of the U.S.? What are we saying about ourselves in relation to Israel by abdicating this kind of power?

A week after returning from Moscow I am told by the Israeli Consul General that Israel's Foreign Ministry had instructed its personnel in Moscow not to cooperate with us. I begin to read stories in the American Jewish and Israeli press that say our Festival was "bad" for Israel because we presented films with diverse, sometimes critical viewpoints on Israeli society and politics, and because we celebrated diaspora life. But I know, particularly after spending time in the Soviet Union, that freedom of expression and exposure to a multiplicity of perspectives can only be "good" for Israelis and diaspora Jews.

I feel grief at the thought of governments using people, but this grief is somehow mitigated by what we've done. The Jewish Film Festival—the largest Jewish cultural event in Soviet history—happened. We found powerful allies in an array of non-Jewish reformers. Fifty thousand people came to the Festival. Many will leave, most will stay. All of us shared a moment in time in which self-determination became possible. □



BAT

How to Welcome the Dead

Carol Edelstein

Because they go and come back,
You must treat your loved ones as if
They are alive.
Sit them upright
Opposite you in sturdy chairs.
Dispense with pleasantries and start right in
With significant glances, meaningful
Sighs. Speak only in the exclamatory.
Such as *"My happiest moment!"*
Or, *"You are the sister I never had!"*
Or, *"Ah! The moonlight across the post office floor!"*

Serve sweet and salty foods but
Don't push. Set the tray
Down gently.
Always make a space.
It takes the dead a while to work up appetite.

Always, always, I am making
A space.
For the you with copper kettle
To return.
For the you with sawdust under your fingernails
To return.
For the you who left me alone with the recipe
For red
To return.
Surely I will leave something out.
I don't know how to make it
In the worst way.
I sit up in bed with my nightmares
Who only advise, *"Sweat. Scream."*
And afterward, night
Is soft as an oblong cloud,
My hat that hovers the house.

Now, as they stand, you must place
Their felt hats in the hands of your dead.
Step back, make space, they are going.

For a while, your room
Seems different.
The blues more blue.
The reds more
Red.

Carol Edelstein lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she leads a writing workshop.

AIDS Activism: A Conversation With Larry Kramer

I first met Larry Kramer nearly ten years ago when AIDS was just beginning to take its toll and he was banging the drum on any corner he could find for AIDS research, treatment, and education. I had my first fight with Mr. Kramer four years later when I reviewed his play *The Normal Heart,* a much-needed indictment of the government's sluggish response to AIDS in the epidemic's early years. I made some nasty comments about the dramaturgy and—as the main character's AIDS activism represents Mr. Kramer's own—about the self-plaudits of the playwright. He was expectably tweaked (and ignored me when we passed in the subway), but he had the last laugh.

The Normal Heart went on to over four hundred productions worldwide; his next play, *Just Say No,* played in New York in 1988, and a new work will open there in 1990. Mr. Kramer's novel, *Faggots,* has been in print continuously since its publication in 1978, and his substantial writings on AIDS were collected and published this year under the title *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist*. The two AIDS organizations Kramer founded (with other community organizers) are arguably the world's most important. Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), born in Mr. Kramer's kitchen in 1981, is the largest patient-services and AIDS-education institution now serving men and women of any sexual orientation. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), with sixty chapters internationally, is foremost in pressing governments to test and release AIDS treatments. Susan Sontag calls Kramer the man who "moves the center off-center" and is quoted on the jacket of his new book saying, "Larry Kramer is one of America's most valuable troublemakers. I hope he never lowers his voice."

I never worried about the spat I had with Mr. Kramer: it is no doubt a testament to his influence that, in gay and AIDS circles, no résumé is complete without one.

Marcia Pally: AIDS pushes so many buttons in us—sexual, moral, fear of contagion and death. What is most important to understand about it now?

Larry Kramer: We have now entered the age of treatment; before we had the age of death. Just as many people live with potentially fatal illnesses such as heart disease or diabetes, we can now establish a holding pattern for AIDS patients while research continues to look for better treatments.

Pally: Though more people die from heart disease or cancer than from AIDS, the government has appropriated more funds for AIDS than for any other. . . .

Kramer: Don't go any further. AIDS warrants the funding because it's transmissible. However tragic these other illnesses, they don't spread like AIDS. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that there will be 100,000 new cases in the next fifteen months; just for comparison's sake, it has taken the last ten years to get the first 100,000 cases. That's 222 new cases a day, one death every half hour. That's why I formed ACT UP. We have no time to waste.

We're a very large organization—we get 400–600 people at our weekly meetings in New York—and we work on women and AIDS, prisoners and AIDS, pediatric AIDS, AIDS among the homeless. But for me the most important committee is Treatment and Data, fighting for the faster release of experimental AIDS drugs.

We fought so hard to get Congress to appropriate money for AIDS, and around 1985 or 1986 the money started being appropriated in sufficient quantity.

Pally: Are you satisfied with government appropriations today?

Kramer: One will never be satisfied because there will never be enough money. I'm more concerned that the money be well spent. The delays are bureaucratic, not financial or scientific.

President Bush's commission on AIDS issued a report saying that we must appoint someone to spearhead and organize AIDS efforts. This is the third commission to tell that to a president (the National Academy of Sciences around 1986, Reagan's commission in 1988, and now this). How many times does a president have to hear that you must put someone in charge of a mess that

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Larry Kramer is the founder of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).

Marcia Pally writes film criticism for Penthouse *and other journals. She is a member of the Communications and Media Committee of the American Civil Liberties Union.*

now involves nearly every government agency, most of which don't get along with one another? You don't have a D day without an Eisenhower; you don't reorganize Chrysler without an Iacocca.

While Bush's rhetoric is good, in actuality we now have the second do-nothing, uncompassionate president. John Sununu, Bush's chief of staff, is as unfeeling and uninterested as Gary Bauer was under Reagan. So we have a high-ranking official carrying out the president's orders—covertly or otherwise—to do nothing.

The head of the National Cancer Institute has said that there is a cure for AIDS, but we're not getting one because there's no one in charge of finding it. When the government wanted to make the A-bomb, it set up the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos with the resources, privacy, and organization to do it. We need a Manhattan Project for AIDS.

Pally: How much AIDS funding has been appropriated?

Kramer: A quarter of a billion dollars for 1986–87 and another quarter billion for 1988–89, and here's what the government did with it:

AIDS research falls under the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) headed by Dr. Anthony Fauci. Fauci decided the best way to spend all this money was to set up a system of local hospital-based centers for testing new AIDS medicines. Hospitals around the country were invited to put in grant applications, and it took them two years to get the system up and dispense the funding. Then, they set up committees to decide which drugs were going to be studied. They had only one doctor at NIAID designing these guidelines. Then the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) got into the act, and meantime more and more people are getting sick.

Most of the studies were confined to various dosages of AZT (azidothymidine)—no other drugs that attack the AIDS virus and no drugs that treat the secondary infections. Meanwhile, the patient-activist community found out that there was a treatment for Pneumocystis pneumonia called aerosolized pentamidine which, if taken prophylactically, would prevent the illness.

Pally: How did you find that out?

Kramer: Dr. Don Abrams, who runs a community research program in San Francisco, and Dr. John Armstrong and his associate Edward Bernard at Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital in New York knew pentamidine was effective in treating Pneumocystis, and they got the idea to try it prophylactically.

We are approaching the tenth year of the epidemic and the enormous community of sick people by now knows more than most doctors because doctors have chosen not to educate themselves fully, and because most of the treatments they could have given their patients have not been approved by the FDA's overlong procedures. Patients have been trying new drugs themselves.

We have an exceedingly well-organized drug underground—I'm talking AIDS medicines, not cocaine. We have treatment newsletters that go out to tens of thousands of people; John James's *AIDS Treatment News* from San Francisco is by far the best. A lot of the information is anecdotal, but if you have enough anecdotal evidence on a drug it becomes sustaining enough to try.

In 1987 I was invited to the Institute for Immunological Disorders in Houston. It was a beautiful hospital, brand new, with a committed staff and room for over a hundred patients. But it's a private, for-profit hospital, and Texas is the only state in the union that doesn't reimburse health care providers for the medical expenses of people who are uninsured. There were perhaps six patients there. It was heartbreaking. The hospital went broke and is now closed.

The leading physician there, Peter Mansell, said, "I have all these sick people and I've got drugs that I think —that I *know*—are useful and I can't legally prescribe them because they aren't okayed by the FDA." He told me that Dr. Fauci's two-year system was a farce; people with AIDS weren't even enrolling in the government experimental drug trials.

In government tests, half the patients get placebos. Nobody who's dying wants a placebo, so when a patient got his first dosage he'd have it analyzed and if it was a placebo he'd drop out of the experiment, so government researchers weren't getting any results. The government also required that patients in government tests give up any other medicines they were using, and you can't expect people who are dying to give up medicines that may be working. AIDS activists told the government all this, we told Fauci to his face, and he wouldn't listen. Mansell showed me his requests to the FDA to test new drugs. The FDA would send the application back objecting to three or five words. "Changing those five words," he said, "will take nine months for me to send it to them and for them to send it back to me."

After the first $250 million was wasted, the NIAID set up another system that was in essence exactly like the old one: the same hospitals, the same grants, the same doctors. And now two years after that's been running it has exactly the same problems. People are not enrolling in the trials; they're testing only AZT. So there goes another quarter billion.

After my trip to Houston, I wanted to scream. I made a speech at New York's Gay and Lesbian Community Center and that was the beginning of ACT UP.

Pally: Who's in the drug underground? How does it work?

Kramer: It started around 1985 with medicines (isoprinosine and ribavirin) that were available in Mexico but not in the U.S., and with AL721, a drug developed in Israel that was thought to be promising but which couldn't be exported because of some patent problem. People in California started smuggling the Mexican drugs across the border and People With AIDS (PWA) Coalition formed a buyers' group for AL721. We have so many sick people it's not surprising they've found ways to get medicine. They're desperate.

Pally: Are doctors involved?

Kramer: American law says, if I'm not mistaken, that a doctor can monitor a patient who brings in a drug not okayed by the FDA as long as the doctor is not prescribing it. I think some doctors are prepared to do that. AIDS patients are learning to take medication by themselves, see how they feel, and report it to others. No two people have the same illness or respond the same way to a drug. People are going to have to take different recipes of drugs and learn how to mix the stuff in their own bodies.

Pally: Who in government has been helpful in getting medicines to AIDS patients?

Kramer: Everyone in government is the enemy and has been, at the city, state, and federal levels, across the board. The AIDS epidemic is here today because of three people: Ronald Reagan for ignoring a fatal epidemic, New York City's former Mayor Ed Koch for ignoring it in his city, and A. M. Rosenthal, the former editor of the *New York Times,* who systematically kept AIDS coverage out of his paper when the public needed to know it was transmissible. We must never forget what Dr. Mathilde Krimm of the American Foundation for AIDS Research said: the epidemic could've been contained, and it is now totally, utterly out of control.

In the first nineteen months of the epidemic, the *New York Times* wrote about AIDS seven times and the total number of cases was up to one thousand. In three months' time, they wrote about the Tylenol-cyanide crisis fifty-four times and the total cases were seven. None of the AIDS stories were on the front page; four of the Tylenol stories were on the front page. If the public had been told that a transmissible disease was going around and that they had to start cooling it, an awful lot of people who are dead would be alive today.

The *Times* reporting has improved since Rosenthal stepped down in that there's more of it, but it's still imprecise and simplistic. For example, there are still serious questions about the long-term use of AZT that the *Times* last August didn't report. I harp on the *Times* because it's considered the newspaper of record the world over; it has the most influence.

It took us twenty months after our first request to get a meeting with Ed Koch. I hate that man so passionately. This was a health emergency in his city and he did not want to know. I have no doubt that it's because he's a closeted gay and was terrified of being perceived as too friendly to the gay community for his own personal and political gain.

Pally: How do you know Koch is gay?

Kramer: I know several of his former—I should say, discarded—boyfriends personally, and I personally know his gay friends who quietly socialize with him. In the past, gay people felt that you should never reveal a person's homosexuality, you should never blow his cover. But closeted gay people in positions of political power are helping to murder us by inaction. If a person is in a public position where he must deal with gay people and gay issues, I don't think it's illegal or libelous to name that person gay. Barney Frank, the openly gay representative from Massachusetts, has pretty much backed this idea: you can be in the closet as long as you're working for us. If you're in the closet and you're working against us, don't expect us to protect you.

Pally: How has Frank been able to survive the scandal about him and a hustler? If a heterosexual congressman had a relationship with a prostitute it might well have cost him his seat.

Kramer: I'm not so sure a straight congressman would've suffered more than Barney. There are numerous people in Congress, like Ted Kennedy, who are known womanizers and get away with it. The only reason Gary Hart caught hell was because he was running for president. The press didn't want to make a bigger deal out of this probably because they're so uncomfortable writing about homosexuality, but also because they know how good Barney is at his job. No one had the stomach to run the story more than once.

There's also a fundamental difference between what Barney was doing and what a straight politician does with a hooker. Barney genuinely wanted a relationship with this man and for a while was in love with him. Yet some of us, myself included, were disappointed in Barney. As desperate and lonely as he evidently was, he lives in the biggest glass bowl in the world and there's no way this relationship could have stayed secret. He's too valu-

(Continued on p. 84)

Up Against the Wall

Judith Plaskow

The struggle of women for the right to pray at the *kotel* (the Western Wall) has received a good deal of coverage recently in the Jewish press. Pictures of ultra-Orthodox men shouting and throwing chairs at women who are simply seeking to worship encapsulate the deep and seemingly irreconcilable divisions within contemporary Judaism. For progressive Jews, the hatred poured out on the "women of the Wall"—hatred rationalized and even encouraged by the Israeli Ministry of Religion—lays bare the deep misogyny present in the Jewish tradition and demonstrates what is at stake in the feminist effort to root that misogyny out. Moreover, the women's suit before the Israeli Supreme Court is an important test case in the church–state debate, for the Israeli government's reaction to the continuing battle at the Wall makes clear the extent to which Israel is a theocratic state.

So far, however, discussion of the *kotel* issue in the pages of *Tikkun* and elsewhere has focused on the right of women to pray at the Wall. On the one hand, it has been pointed out that the women have comported themselves with dignity, that they are part of a long tradition of female prayer (see *Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1990), that they have conducted their services within the framework of Halakha, that the *kotel* belongs to all Jews, and that women have every right to pray there. On the other hand, Orthodox Jews who have little sympathy with the violence used against the women still use the argument that the women's worship violates the "custom of the place" and thus is an affront to other worshipers. The women's action, say these Orthodox Jews, must stem from political, rather than religious, motives. Those of us who are uncomfortable not because the women of the Wall are asking so much but because they are asking so little have not yet publicly raised our voices.

In sharing my ambivalence about the *kotel* situation, I speak as a diaspora Jewish feminist who is more troubled by the diaspora reaction to the women of the Wall than by the choices of women in Israel. I fully understand why some women would want to pray at the Wall, and why, for a combination of religious and political reasons, they might choose to do so within halakhic boundaries. I cannot, however, accept a diaspora response to this decision that is not rooted in the greater religious freedom of the Diaspora and that does not place the battle at the Wall in the larger context of Jewish feminism.

First, the halakhic issue. At the inaugural national Jewish feminist conference, held in New York in 1973, the question arose as to whether at the Sabbath morning service we women would constitute ourselves a minyan and conduct a full prayer service or define ourselves in halakhic terms as four hundred individual women praying together. Representatives of both views met for many hours to iron out our strong disagreement.

Jewish feminists in the United States have moved far beyond the language of rights to the language of transformation.

The Orthodox women (many of whom have since become part of the women's prayer network) felt that to consider themselves a minyan would violate their religious principles and discredit them in their communities. The non-Orthodox women (of whom I was one) could not accept having gathered women from all over the country for this extraordinary occasion only to define ourselves within a framework that said we did not exist. Finally, late at night, we reached a compromise: we would hold a full service; Orthodox women would not respond to the Barekhu or other sections of the service that required a minyan; women called to the Torah would decide on an individual basis what part(s) of the blessing to say.

Now, seventeen years later, services have been held in many U.S. cities in support of the women at the Wall. These services, supposedly representing a spirit of religious unity and compromise among Jewish women, have been constituted as prayer groups rather than minyanim. Who is compromising here? Who is uniting with whom? From a non-Orthodox perspective, this appears not as a genuine middle ground requiring concessions from both sides, but as another round of "most Orthodox common denominator," a game familiar to

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all those who work across Jewish denominational lines. According to the rules of this game, only the Orthodox have principles that cannot be compromised, because Orthodox principles are rooted in divine imperative. All the rest of us can give up our quirky Jewish practices for the sake of unity. This ignores the fact that there are an increasing number of Jews for whom counting women in a minyan is every bit as fundamental *and sacred* a principle as maintaining the status quo is for the Orthodox. Shall this principle, established seventeen years ago, be surrendered now?

The question of minyan versus prayer group raises a second point. The women of the *kotel* and their supporters in the United States seem to assume that if they are "good girls," if they play the game within halakhic rules, then sooner or later the Israeli Ministry of Religion or the Supreme Court will grant them what they want. After all, their demand is entirely reasonable. There are no real halakhic barriers to women praying together. But the ferocity of response to women praying together at the Wall—and indeed, the controversy over women's prayer groups in the United States—should make absolutely clear that the assumption that women can win by playing things safe is false.

The issue is not Halakha at all. The issue is male fear and rage at the idea of autonomous women defining their own relationship to the Jewish tradition. The issue is power: Who will have power over Jewish women's lives? The battle at the Wall supports the view of one prominent feminist who said that women will be hated just as much for being a little bit feminist as for being radical feminists. So we may as well be radical feminists and put forth a bolder agenda!

When we fail to name the real issue as that of the power to define what Judaism is and will become we are forced into the undignified position of having to defend and plead for our rights as Jewish women. As I have suggested, discussion of the women at the Wall has centered around the "right" of women to be there. A century ago, there were similar arguments about the "right" of women to higher education, and there have been many arguments in American society over the "right" of Blacks and other oppressed groups to jobs, education, political office, and so on. While we cannot abandon the language of rights so long as the rights of all are not secured, we must also recognize the limits of this language which sets as a goal what should be taken as a given. That is why Jewish feminists in the United States have moved far beyond the language of rights to the language of transformation.

Many of us have taken women's Jewish rights as a starting point and then have asked how the presence of women will transform Judaism: What new rituals will we need to create that reflect our experience? How will our naming of God change? How will Jewish history be rewritten? But media focus on whether or not women have the "right" to pray together obscures and displaces all these more fundamental issues.

This brings me to my third source of ambivalence about the issue of the *kotel*: the controversy brings U.S. feminists together around an Israel-centered agenda. It has become a commonplace that support for Israel as a prime source of identity for U.S. Jews substitutes for a creative and meaningful diaspora Judaism. Jewish feminism has been an exception to this rule. It has flourished in the United States with a variety, depth, and vitality that have no parallel in Israel. But now an International Committee for the Women of the Kotel has formed to support the women praying there on Israeli-defined terms.

Are there no other issues Jewish feminists have to organize around—here and internationally? Are there not dozens of problems about which we could benefit from sharing ideas and resources? Could we not organize around liturgical change, around a new curriculum from grade school to seminary, around wife and child abuse in Jewish families, around other problems in Israel set aside by the women at the Wall such as the connection between feminism and the Palestinian question? Why should we not devote our money and resources to founding a broad Jewish feminist network for which the women at the Wall is just one issue?

I am in no way opposed to the women of the *kotel* or to diaspora support for them. On the contrary, the right of Jewish women to pray together at the Wall is—*like the right of women to participate in all Jewish rituals*—an absolute baseline that can never be compromised or negotiated. Were I in Israel I would be there at the Wall, not because praying at the Wall with women would in itself be religiously meaningful to me, but because I see the struggle being fought there as a sacred struggle. But from the vantage point of the Diaspora, I view this struggle as only one very small step in the larger transformation of Judaism. And when we come together as Jewish feminists in ways that do not name and—in their accommodation to Orthodoxy—even deny that larger context, then I become uncomfortable. I would rather stay home or put my energy elsewhere than set aside what U.S. Jewish feminists have fought for and accomplished in the last twenty years. □

Cynicism at the Corps, or Havel Meets the Press

Jay Rosen

In his much-praised speech to Congress last February, Vaclav Havel warned his audience that, despite the end of the cold war, no "definitive victory" had been won:

> Interests of all kinds: personal, selfish, state, national, group, and, if you like, company interests still considerably outweigh genuinely common and global interests.... We still don't know how to put morality ahead of politics, science, and economics. We are still incapable of understanding that the only genuine backbone of our actions—if they are to be moral—is responsibility. Responsibility to something higher than my family, my country, my firm, my success.

Two days later, in a discussion of Havel's visit on the PBS program "Washington Week in Review," Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* observed the following:

> You know, it's great to have a playwright up there, and it was wonderful symbolism.... But politics is not about poetry, it's about power. It's about making choices, and not very pure choices sometimes. I think Havel's a wonderful man. I wish him well. I hope he makes a wonderful president, but I think the book is still out.

Taking Friedman's remark as my text, I propose a brief tour of the moral universe of the American journalist, and the challenges to it posed by Havel's presence on the world stage.

The best way to gain prestige and notoriety in journalism is to cover politics, in particular national politics, and especially the White House. In moving up this ladder, reporters are soon confronted with a contradiction. They find that, while rising to the top of their profession, they become utterly dependent on officials of the state.

The White House press corps is a population of captives, subject to the whims of the president and his press officers. If the president condescends to answer questions today, the reporters may have something to do. Otherwise they wait around like ill-fed dogs, hoping to be tossed a scrap of news. The situation is most extreme at the White House, but the same pattern is repeated at every level of government: reporters, whose professional mythology stresses their independence from the state, become reliant on officials for stories, quotes, leaks, and, most important, a source of authority for the news. Journalists, after all, generally lack any authority of their own—that is, any right to say what's good, true, or just.

Objectivity for the journalist is a negotiated surrender of rights.

Unlike the members of other professions—medicine, law, consulting—journalists do not own their own shop. They are employees of wealthy and powerful corporations, to which "freedom of the press" ultimately belongs. But the press also has a duty to report and comment on politics, and most media companies recognize this. (Even the *New York Post* has a Washington bureau.) The two identities—private employee, public servant—are perpetually in conflict, and this has led to a compromise solution: "objectivity," the journalist's official declaration of political neutrality. The declaration does not always prevent bias from seeping into the news, but it does keep journalists from openly declaring themselves on moral or political issues.

Objectivity, then, is a negotiated surrender of rights. Journalists give up their right to "editorialize," which is to say, to speak as members of the political community. This helps to mute the conflict between their own views and the interests of management, and makes regular interference in the news unnecessary. In return, journalists are granted the opportunity to "cover" politics, in which they become intensely involved (though only as detached observers). Here, then, is the paradox of the political reporter: drawn to politics as the realm in which the craft of reporting gains the most meaning, the reporter declines, nonetheless, to find any meaning in politics, for this would compromise the declaration of objectivity.

As Peter Gabel has argued in a previous issue of *Tikkun* (Sept./Oct. 1988), people in the news media develop an "observer mentality" which allows them "to

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experience, in a voyeuristic way, being part of a political community and yet, at the same time, to insulate themselves from the risk that normally comes with being part of such a community." As observers of politics, journalists cultivate a detached and cynical style, in which the worst faux pas is to trust the sincerity of a politician. Through this ethic of mistrust, journalists attempt to portray their own profession as an honorable one, in contrast to that of conniving government officials. We know they care about the truth because they ask "tough" questions of people in power—who usually prefer not to answer them.

Such is the theme of almost every White House press conference: reporters fling their "gotcha" questions at the president in an exhibition of their toughness. The president, of course, answers only when he chooses, demonstrating his ultimate mastery of the press. Journalists, however, never threaten to quit the arrangement because they need the president and his authority. Frustration over these conditions breeds further cynicism among reporters, who are backed into asking even "tougher" (and ruder) questions.

With this cult of toughness journalists attempt to win a measure of independence from state officials, but ultimately they play into the state's hands. The cynical observer is likely to embrace a realpolitik worldview, in which nations and their leaders are expected to act in their own narrow interests. Part of the attraction of a realpolitik attitude is that it gives the journalist a moral function that is easy to carry out. If the only "real" politics is the politics of naked self-interest, then the journalist's task is apparent: to penetrate the public-relations fog and expose the calculations of the interested parties. The press, in other words, has its own investment in the view of politics as a cynical power game. It is a view that puts journalists in the best possible light—as the ones committed to truth in politics.

A new figure on the world stage, Havel denies the press this sort of moral advantage. Through his previous membership in the category of "dissident," he has earned a reputation—in the media and elsewhere—as a thoroughly moral man. It was precisely his willingness to speak the truth (and pay the price—five years in prison) that won him the presidency of Czechoslovakia. It is impossible, then, for journalists to portray themselves as more committed to the truth than Havel.

When a man like George Bush says that his goal is to be the "education president," journalists smile, for Bush has provided them with an easy opportunity to display their truth-telling credentials. All self-respecting reporters will make a point of mentioning that Bush's proposed budget shows little increase in aid to education; or at the very least, they will quote a Democrat in Congress saying the same thing. Through such tactics, journalists routinely align themselves with the truth, in contrast to politicians' eternal need to mislead and cover up.

But when Havel says that we must learn to place moral concerns "ahead of politics, science, and economics," he places journalists in a much more humble position. First, his sincerity cannot be doubted, and so there is no point in penetrating his facade to expose his "real" motives. Second, and even more disturbing, is the possibility that, in taking Havel's message seriously, journalists may find it applies *to themselves*. Do journalists know how to "put morality ahead of politics, science, and economics"? Do they realize their own "responsibility to something higher than my family, my country, my firm, my success"?

It is in this context that I wish to consider Thomas Friedman's remark that "politics is not about poetry, it's about power." As a *New York Times* correspondent, Friedman has distinguished himself by winning two Pulitzer Prizes for foreign reporting. Many people feel that in his writing about the Middle East he has shown not only a shrewd understanding of events but an appreciation of politics as the only possible path to peace. In his coverage of Israel he has also sought out "unofficial" voices, something unusual for a diplomatic reporter.

Friedman's comment on "Washington Week in Review" could be classified as a casual remark, but this, I think, is what makes it worth considering. The journalist's offhand attitude about leaders like Havel is that they are essentially irrelevant to the way politics is conducted in the *real world*. So Friedman admires Havel, calls him a "wonderful man," and wishes him well, but he also feels free to dismiss his importance as a player on the world stage. "Politics is not about poetry, it's about power" means that we needn't take seriously Havel's stirring message about morality and responsibility, for it does not describe how things really work in a world where decisions must be made.

As a decision maker himself, however, Havel has confounded this attitude. In a speech to the Polish parliament in January, he said that he wanted

> ... to bring spirituality, moral responsibility, humaneness, and humility into politics and, in that respect, to make clear that there is something higher above us, that our deeds do not disappear into the black hole of time but are recorded somewhere and judged, and that we have neither the right nor the reason to think that we understand everything and that we can do everything.

* * *

In deeds as well as words, Havel has displayed the movement of a keen moral intelligence, and in this sense his presidency *is* a kind of poetry. It was poetry, of a sort, when he named as ambassador to the Soviet Union the son of a Jewish Communist who was executed in a 1952 show trial inspired by Moscow. A similar impulse led Havel to invite the Tibetan Dalai Lama to Prague, despite China's threats to cancel two nuclear power plants on order from Czechoslovakia. Havel said he thought the invitation was the right thing to do, so he went ahead, apologizing to the Chinese if they could not see the logic of this explanation. (The contrast with George Bush's solicitous treatment of China is, I suppose, also part of the poetry.)

It was certainly poetry when Havel visited both German states on his first trip abroad as president, announcing during the visit an official Czech commission of inquiry into the expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland after May 1945. By apologizing for the expulsion, he set a moral example for the German people, whose need to come to terms with their own history is still so great.

Havel also believes that the expulsion of the Germans, which took place under a Czech government, was an important step in his own country's surrender to totalitarianism. He wants the people of Czechoslovakia to face up to such facts, and told them so in his New Year's Day address. "It would be very unwise," he said, "to think of the heritage of the last forty years only as something foreign, something inherited from a distant relative."

And it was poetry once again when Havel arranged for the president of West Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker, to visit Prague on March 15, the anniversary of Hitler's march into Czechoslovakia fifty-one years earlier. Havel called the visit an "anti-event," a symbolic cancellation of Hitler's arrival as head of an occupying army.

In his new role, Havel tries to find gestures that dramatize his program of truth, trust, moral responsibility, and spiritual renewal. But the gestures are not a "front," presented to conceal his actual intentions; rather, the gestures *are* the intention. In this respect Havel believes in an *intelligible* politics. There was nothing "behind" the arrangement of von Weizsäcker's visit to Prague, no hidden motive or secret signal. It was not a media stunt, but simply a symbolic event the meaning of which was readily apparent to journalists and citizens alike.

Havel cannot be understood by a tough-talking reporter determined to ask unsettling questions, for his instincts are not to conceal the truth. This was something that threw off Lally Weymouth of the *Washington Post* when she interviewed Havel shortly before his visit to the U.S. Weymouth begins her account of this meeting by observing that after two months on the job Havel "isn't quite sure how a president is supposed to act." He still offers answers "that sound very much like the truth," she notes. At one point, Weymouth reports, Havel appeared nervous about having been so candid. "Maybe a president isn't supposed to give such direct answers," she comments. "He pauses, confers with an aide, and then says, 'I don't know what I can tell to newspapers and what shouldn't be told. I am an inexperienced president.'"

Journalists cultivate a detached and cynical style in which the worst faux pas is to trust the sincerity of a politician.

By choosing to portray Havel in this fashion—as a bumbling amateur with a touching naiveté about truth in politics—Weymouth implicitly positions herself as the pro, someone who understands how presidents are "supposed to act." Presidents are "supposed" to shade the truth, and avoid it completely when it threatens their political prospects. In Weymouth's view, any president who doesn't grasp this is obviously an amateur.

There is a second revealing moment in Weymouth's interview when, adopting the accustomed stance of the "tough" reporter, she questions Havel about upcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union on troop withdrawals. Not wanting to show his hand, he hesitates, and then admonishes his interviewer: "You need news, but we need the Soviet troops out of here!"

This remark is a direct challenge to the journalist's hierarchy of values, for Havel is asking Weymouth to consider which is more important, her desire to provoke him into some minor revelation or his attempt to obtain the withdrawal of Soviet forces. This amounts to asking Weymouth, "Which side are you on? Do you want to see me succeed, or not?" The journalist's usual reply is simply to say, "I am on no one's side, I am just here to report the facts." But part of what gives this answer its moral weight is the assumption that the facts are hidden behind a veil of lies, or, at least, a public relations facade. Havel wants to overturn this assumption in international politics; indeed, he wants to repeal the whole realpolitik approach in which nations and leaders always do what is solely in their own interests, while paying only lip service to higher ideals.

Can he succeed? Who knows, given the weight of the forces against him. A more telling question, though, is: Who wants him to succeed? International arms dealers? Definitely not. Ousted apparatchiks? No. Pentagon bureaucrats? Probably not. The press? Hmmm. Considering their own embrace of realpolitik assumptions, journalists may unconsciously resist Havel's goal of introducing "moral responsibility, humaneness, and humility into politics." They may find subtle ways of perpetuating their preferred view that politics is a world of phony images and verbal fig leaves. As Peter Gabel writes, "Journalists are inevitably hostile toward the very things [in politics] they adore." They may, in fact, prefer this hostility to the challenge of understanding its causes.

What do journalists really believe in? What kind of world would they like to see? What kind of politics is most likely to bring that world about? What kind of journalism would encourage such a politics? Reporters do not often engage in this kind of introspection, for they see it as irrelevant to their task, which is to find the facts and pressure politicians to confront them.

But it cannot be in pursuit of facts that hundreds of reporters gather at the White House each day, hoping to be thrown a morsel of news. After all, the president and his aides have every incentive to control the flow of information, and control it they do. By showing up daily, journalists ensure their own manipulation. No, the real reason reporters flock to the White House has nothing to do with the availability of news. Rather, it's that within journalism there is no willingness to make an independent judgment about where those hundreds of reporters belong. Why aren't they out hunting down new approaches to politics, uncovering neglected problems, interviewing future leaders, and publicizing ideas the polity needs to consider? To do so would require journalists to develop a public vision of their own, a replacement for the worn-out tenets of realpolitik and the distancing device of objectivity.

Perhaps this is too much to ask of a profession that, after all, is dependent on the goodwill of its corporate employers. Also, there's no guarantee that the public would accept a more morally committed press. But it is not necessary for journalists to openly declare themselves liberals (or conservatives) to make clear that they stand for something beyond freedom for their own profession. Open conflict with employers and audiences can be avoided by fashioning a moral philosophy around broad public values. Human rights, mutual trust, civility, respect and tolerance of differences, the rule of law, a commitment to honest and rational discussion, concern for something beyond immediate and personal gain—these are ideals journalists can legitimately uphold as members of a political community.

Reporters may indeed have a duty to remain detached from particular measures in politics. But this detachment has meaning only so long as politics has meaning. If politics is only about power and never about poetry, if politicians are only interested in their own fortunes, and never ours, if a cynical and ironic stance is always proper to take, then what dignity can there be, in journalism or citizenship? □

Every Grain

Susan Abraham

Deep in the sea grass
the dunes hide a place
where I could lie forever
even after my blood stays still.
I'm like a horse nibbled by flies
with no urge to move.
The sand rubs away everything
foul or old, leaves only my bones
bleached white. Soon
I'll be that handful of broken shells
drizzling through fingers
and every grain of me will swell content.

Oh, the clean removal of it,
the fearlessness of letting the earth
erode me! Here, a tern
sinks into a pillow of air and lets go!
If the sea had rushed through my door
one night to orphan me
and all I could grab were a cup
and a raincoat
I would be like Moses in the rushes, waiting
to be plucked by a princess,
shuttled to a place without walls
like the scratch in the sand the tern calls home.

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Press Pass

Shana Penn

Years ago I dated a man named Adam. Adam was a newspaper reporter. He read five different newspapers every morning before leaving the house for work. He was a man of facts. He mistrusted subjectivity. He mistrusted its subject—first-person singular. Adam rarely read fiction, he couldn't understand poetry, he never dreamed, and he had no memory.

On the other hand, he walked in this world. Nimble and nervous. A man of matter. His grasp of the present was incisive. For this, he was frequently bylined.

I believe in love at first sight. Being crazy in heat as the door opens. The doorknob wobbles. My sweaty palm is melting the knob. My steaming skin sucks you in before the door fully opens. We slide down the door. Get lost in paradise. That space between the outdoors and indoors, where we're both hungry for the same kind of food at the same time.

We get lost in paradise, that space where we're both hungry for the same kind of food at the same time.

With Adam, the wind blew the door wide open. No tremors. No forest fires. Mother Nature was napping. I immediately began weighing his attributes: bright, charming, polished table manners. Secretly I knew we were doomed.

Adam sent me bouquets of wilted daisies. Brown petals and slimy stems. He returned my phone calls. He wined and dined me on his expense account. We lusted on his expense account. "An oasis of earthly delights," stated a hotel's matchbook covers. But lust does not build trust, and we were quickly approaching some facts.

Adam was born in a displaced-persons camp to Polish-Jewish parents who never discussed the war years. His past became a series of headlines that his family had written together: *Family Survives Holocaust. Family Moves to U.S.A. Mother Is a Working Woman but Loves Her Children. Eldest Sister Raises Siblings.* No stories followed. No photos, no captions. Only blank columns.

No news is good news.

An urban evening *au cinéma.* A Polish man hides and rapes an aristocratic Jewish woman. She is running from the Nazis. He is running, too. I slid my hand into Adam's. His skin was mute, darkened by newsprint I could not read. No eyes of God to bridge our worlds.

Later in his apartment, the same hand reached, rocked, unbuttoned me. I unzipped his facts, lifted out poetry.

"When we make love, I see our bodies entwined like two snakes spiraling up one another."

"How can you see that?" Adam shrunk away from me.

"How can you not?"

"Have you noticed my skin?" Adam extended his arms. "How patches have lost pigment?"

On elbows and wrists, across his jawline, above his left eyebrow, gradually over time, skin had turned gray. Adam peered into the bathroom mirror. Was he fading?

One morning, after a breakfast of the *New York Times,* the *L.A. Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Wall Street Journal,* and the *Christian Science Monitor,* Adam and I prepared to leave for work.

"Don't forget—the newspapers go in the recycling bin, not the trash can."

"You think this token gesture will save forests?"

"Yes."

Adam rushed ahead of me through the front door. I called after him, "Do you want an apple?" He stopped cold, a frozen tree, and muttered suspiciously, "How did you know I wanted an apple?"

The moment froze, and I gazed upon his dread: that I could penetrate his unconscious, that I could read his mind and he, Adam, desired an apple. That moment, an innocent act of caring, became a fleeting kernel of history swirling through the cosmos and slapping me across the face. I was the woman who offered Adam an apple, which he hungrily ate—biting, glaring—spitting seeds of resentment between us.

I slapped the air. Scooped up Adam's discarded apple seeds, black and wet. I planted them.

Every fall, the apples grow fat and drop. A harvest. □

Shana Penn is an editor for the Elmwood Institute, an ecology think tank based in Berkeley, California. She is currently writing a collection of memoirs and short stories.

Red, White, and Jew: Holocaust Museum on the Mall

Howard Husock

By the time it opens in the spring of 1993, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington will likely be viewed as the most important postwar statement of organized American Judaism apart from support for Israel. The cost of museum construction and endowment is estimated at $147 million, money to be raised largely from Jewish donations to the Memorial's ongoing "campaign to remember." Some twenty-six donors, including five Holocaust survivors, already have given $1 million apiece.

Such endorsement reflects the conventional belief that whatever can be done to preserve the memory of Nazi genocide *should* be done. This is not a new development in American Jewish culture. The Holocaust remembrance movement has, over the last decade, become increasingly central to Jewish identity and observance. (See Adi Ophir, "The Sanctification of the Holocaust," *Tikkun,* Vol. 2, No. 1.) Holocaust-related memorials or institutions are to be found throughout the country, from New York to El Paso. There is much good in this. My children will not grow up among concentration camp survivors (as I did) and will not hear the stories of escapes and death, so I am glad to know there will be places for them to meet such people, if only on videotape.

Still, the Washington memorial is both different and troubling. It is more than just the largest, most expensive, and most ambitious institution of its genre. It is an institution that will take its place among the American national monuments—the Jefferson Memorial, the Smithsonian museums, the Washington Monument, the National Archives's display of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Literature put out by the presidentially appointed U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council charged with overseeing the project repeatedly emphasizes the museum's location "only 400 yards from the Washington Monument—on the national Mall." Immediately adjacent to the Bureau of Printing and Engraving ("the Mint"), the Holocaust Museum will be a new stop for an anticipated one million visitors each year. As the council's July 1988 newsletter puts it, "Museum location is visitor lure."

A place among our national monuments and museums, however, involves more than a convenient location. Any new institution on the Mall adds, in effect, a new clause to the statement of American national values. This is what concerns me. I fear that in their ambition to ensure the remembrance of the Holocaust supporters of the museum project have overlooked context and inadvertently done more harm than good to their cause. The museum is both a new kind of institution for the Mall and a new kind of statement for it.

No other institutions on the Mall focus on a single ethnic or religious group. Making an exception for an identifiably Jewish museum either calls for a similar representation of other groups, with their own histories of suffering, or raises the question of why these groups are not represented. In either case, I am troubled by what the consequences may be for American civil religion, the historically nondenominational set of ideals represented by the other monuments on the Mall.

Unlike Yehuda Bauer (*Tikkun,* May/June 1989), I am not worried that an attempt to incorporate a Holocaust memorial into the civil religion will somehow trivialize the tragedy. On the contrary, I am concerned that introducing a particularized element to the panoply of American national monuments will threaten to splinter and thereby undermine a civil religion that has served American Jews so well that we now take it for granted. With the museum design approved and construction already underway, it may be too late to change course. Still, the entire project invites scrutiny.

I should note, to begin with, that there has never been a specific congressional mandate to build a Holocaust museum on the Mall. In October of 1980, Congress unanimously approved the recommendations of the thirty-four-member President's Commission on the Holocaust (appointed by Jimmy Carter in the context of his human rights campaign in November 1978, and chaired by Elie Wiesel). The commission had suggested that a new United States Holocaust Memorial Council be given the right to build a Holocaust memorial

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on "any real property in the District of Columbia" owned by "any department, agency or instrumentality of the United States." The legislation in no way specified a museum on the Mall, though it did not preclude it either. It was the Holocaust Council itself that obtained the site at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Raoul Wallenberg Way from the General Services Administration. Public comment about the site was neither required nor invited.

The Council's only oversight has been in matters of design: the National Capital Planning Commission and the Federal Commission of Fine Arts must approve plans for all building on the Mall. At a 1987 Commission of Fine Arts public hearing, questions were raised about the site. A woman identifying herself as a Holocaust survivor termed the proposal "conceptually flawed" because "the Holocaust experience is not central to the American national experience." *Washington Post* architecture critic Benjamin Forgey found the location "unsettling." Although the Commission of Fine Arts had the right to raise questions about the museum design (and did), it had no authority to challenge the Mall location.

The Commission and its supporters have in retrospect advanced two major rationales for choosing the Mall site. First, the Holocaust Memorial Commission has sought to justify the Memorial's addition to the national symbol collection in universalist terms. Harvey Meyerhoff, the Baltimore developer and philanthropist who is the current chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Council, wrote in the *Washington Post*:

> Why should a museum devoted to the Holocaust—an event that took place on European soil and primarily on the body of the Jewish people—find its home on the Mall? [Because] the Holocaust represents a loss of innocence for civilization. It is a manifestation of the dark side of human civilization whose accomplishments are celebrated in the nearby Smithsonian Institution. If the Smithsonian represents the accomplishments of civilization, the Holocaust raised fundamental questions about the capacity of individuals and of technology and human genius for evil.

Museum architect James I. Freed, himself a child refugee from Nazi Germany, has gone further in this respect, writing:

> It is my view that the Holocaust defines a radical, but hopefully not a final, break with the optimistic conception of continuous social and political improvement underlying the material culture of the West.

The second major justification for the museum involves the "insurance policy" it might seem to represent for the Jews. By maintaining the historical victim status of Jews, the monument becomes part of a strategy to avoid future persecution. Phillip Lopate has called this "the role of chief victim," one which "affords us an edge" (*Tikkun*, May/June 1989). The protection to be afforded by such a role was an explicit theme at the museum's groundbreaking ceremony in October 1988, at which Ronald Reagan put it this way:

> The Jewish people were on this earth at the time of the pyramids. Those structures are still standing and the Jews are still here. We must make sure that when the tall towers of our greatest cities have crumbled to dust in the turnings of time, the Jewish people will still be on this earth.

Both these justifications for the Mall memorial—"loss of innocence" and "insurance policy"—are problematic. The national Mall is a collection of monuments and institutions cut from the fabric of American history. To be sure, there is a relationship between the events of the Holocaust and American history. Museum literature makes much of the American failure to take in more refugees (such as those turned away in 1939 on the ill-fated ship *St. Louis*), as well as Allied failure to bomb train lines leading to concentration camps. These links to American conduct during World War II notwithstanding, would Meyerhoff really assert that, in choosing from the events of American history, these actions most illustrated a capacity for evil? It is difficult to avoid the argument that the genocide of the Native American or the question of slavery and its aftermath may constitute the central confrontation with evil in American history. Where are the monuments to this loss of innocence?



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The Holocaust Museum as it is now planned will be a monument not only to the suffering of the Jews but to the use of ethnic power politics in the American political system. How can American Jews overlook the fact that we have used political clout and an ability to raise a large private endowment to define universal evil as those events which have most deeply affected *us*? By supporting an exclusively Jewish memorial ostensibly predicated on the need to confront universal evil, we send a message to other victim groups—Blacks clearly being the most important in the current political context—that we are not interested in the historic similarities that may unite us.

In their ambition to ensure the remembrance of the Holocaust, supporters of the museum project have overlooked context and inadvertently done more harm than good.

There is a strained feeling to the "lost innocence" argument, a sense that it has been contrived to justify a museum its backers wanted to build for other reasons. George Will, another prominent supporter of the Holocaust Memorial, has argued for the need

> to locate a grim disturbing display amidst the Mall's patriotic and celebratory symbols.... The Museum is needed because nothing in nature is more remarkable, or dangerous, than the recuperative power of innocence in a liberal society.

Does Will really mean to say that the monuments to Lincoln and Jefferson are monuments to innocence? Their lives and their monuments have come to stand for struggle: Jefferson's against the old order of monarchs, Lincoln's against secession and slavery. To say that the Museum of American History, another institution on the Mall, represents an innocent's approach to the past is to ignore the scholarship and complexity of its exhibits. (A recent exhibit chronicling Black migration from South to North comes to mind.)

The interpretation of American history represented by the existing monuments on the Mall is not so naive. Taken as a whole, the monuments speak for the need to hold antidemocratic forces at bay in the United States. There are other sites (Gettysburg and Antietam) where Americans are reminded of darker possibilities. And there is a tension and struggle inherent in the Mall itself. But overall, the Mall is meant to reinforce American values, to acquaint new generations with them, and to inspire a striving toward ideals that constantly threaten to elude us. Do Jews really want their one statement in the Mall's symbolic conversation to be so overwhelmingly dark, so unequivocally skeptical of democracy's achievement on this continent?

But what if the real purpose here is not to make a grand statement about evil but to ward off anti-Semitism—the "insurance policy" motive? In this light, one must also include the possible benefits museum supporters may quietly perceive for Israel. The memorial on the Mall represents a sure-fire way to spotlight day in and day out the historic justification of a Jewish state before Congress and the White House, much in the way that Avishai Margalit has described the children's room at Yad Vashem (the Israeli Holocaust Museum). That room, says Margalit, is used in Israel

> to deliver a message to foreign statesmen (in this case American legislators with influence over foreign aid and foreign policy) that all of us here in Israel (substitute all Jews) are these children and that Hitler-Arafat is after us.

Such tactics may be effective. Still, if, as Emil Fackenheim has written, a Jew after Auschwitz is commanded "not to respond to Hitler's attempt to destroy Judaism by himself cooperating in its destruction," there remains the question of how best to prevent such an unthinkable outcome. It may seem somehow self-evident that an emotional telling of the Holocaust story in a prominent place will serve as an effective means to check anti-Semitism and, at the same time, ensure American support for Israel. In my view, though, the museum risks undermining that support and bringing out an anti-Semitism latent in American culture.

The museum on the Mall represents a radical departure from the historic American Jewish approach to mass political culture. Although Jews in the U.S. have generally been on the political Left, we have long acted on the belief that a common civic culture of tolerance—the so-called civic religion—is the best protection for dissenters, whether religious or political. We have used popular culture not to express specific Jewish concerns or principles, but to restate American values. I am thinking here of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," even the Jewish creators (Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster) of Superman, that representative of "truth, justice, and the American way."

Nor has there been a lack of Jewish effort to point out the ironies and contradictions of the American system. E. Y. Harburg's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?," the Warner Brothers social realism films of

(Continued on p. 92)

Feminist Men

Terry Allen Kupers

A certain number of sensitive men believe that joining women in the struggle for equality is the best way to attain not only a satisfying primary relationship but also personal fulfillment. They listen to women, learn from their demands and the way they live their lives, and struggle with them to end sexism at home as well as in society. A generation of feminist men learned in the sixties and seventies to do what had once been considered women's work: cooking, housecleaning, and child-rearing. If the venture was at all successful, they also learned that there are payoffs to the redivision of labor: the joys of close contact with children from infancy, the experience of sharing feelings, and the like.

For a while it did seem to many that the struggle against sexism was the best way to construct a happy relationship. To some it even seemed that the political activism of the sixties could live on in the personal struggle for equality between the sexes. But then mishaps began to occur. Relationships floundered. Crises of one sort or another threw many men into emotional turmoil. Men began to realize that being "feminist" was not enough. There had to be a stage of male development beyond feminism, a way for men to be powerful without being sexist. And there must be a way for men to stop obsessing about the theme of power and their place in an oppressive hierarchy.

* * *

Jim entered my office nervously and walked around looking at the art on the walls and the books on the shelves. He smiled, as if pleased, and sat down, sinking slowly into a semifetal position on the chair as he began to speak: "My wife is having an affair. I don't know what to do. I'm so jittery I can't sleep nights. Do I tell her I know and start a big fight—maybe break us up—or do I just shut up about it, treat her well, and hope she'll stop seeing the guy?" After a few minutes he began to cry, apologizing and saying he hadn't cried like this in years.

"I've done everything right. We always negotiated every decision we made together, and I always made sure we were divvying things up equally. Now she's cheating on me, treating me like dirt. And this guy she's seeing—a real sleaze—he doesn't even know what feminism is all about! It just isn't fair!" By now he was sitting up in his chair, leaning forward and expressing some anger.

Jim had always supported his wife's efforts to succeed and feel powerful. They met in the seventies. She was in a women's consciousness-raising group. He was very interested in what she was learning about herself. They married and he supported her while she returned to university to earn a graduate degree at a professional school. After she graduated and established herself in her profession, they had two children. Following each birth, he cut back at work and did much of the housework while she returned to part-time work within a few months.

Jim always thought they had an ideal relationship. What went wrong? We talked quite a bit about this. It quickly became apparent that she, having had a strict and critical father who would not permit her much freedom as a girl, chose for a mate someone who could listen to her and help her feel self-assured and very much her own person. He, having learned from an early age to put his needs aside and take care of his depressed mother (this was the only way he could feel close to her) was ready and able to "take care of" his wife in many very admirable ways. They were both psychologically prepared for the message of the women's movement and struggled quite passionately and sincerely to put it into practice in their everyday lives. They spent fifteen years together, the picture of progressive feminist marital bliss.

Being treated well, she enjoyed her newfound freedom for awhile. She developed confidence. Then she began to feel there was something wrong. Perhaps she could not put it into words, and needed to emote or act out in seemingly irrational ways—by screaming at him without reason, or by having an affair. He, meanwhile, was not very good at setting limits with the person he most wanted to please. So she felt unmet, out of control, or just plain irritable. He had felt for some time that she wasn't very interested in satisfying his needs, but he said nothing about this.

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Jim's marriage needed a serious overhaul, and each of the partners needed to look at his or her own personal issues. We discussed the situation, examined Jim's inability to confront his wife, and related that inability to some still unprocessed conflicts he had about his early relationship with his mother. He defended his mother—as if talking about her faults constituted disloyalty—but then became aware of a certain amount of resentment he had always harbored toward her. He began to see he had been suppressing similar resentment toward his wife, resentment that had been mounting long before she began the affair. Soon after commencing therapy, Jim decided to stop crying silently and fading into the furniture. He confronted his wife, told her he knew about the affair, and for once expressed more outrage than she during a heated battle that resulted in their sleeping in separate rooms for several nights.

He considered leaving her at this point and, according to his report, she considered leaving him. In the end, neither wanted to end the relationship. She promised to stop seeing her lover, and they decided to see a therapist together and renew their efforts to make the marriage work. Meanwhile, he began his own psychotherapy in earnest, the primary goal being to feel more self-confident, more "manly"—without giving up his commitment to feminism.

Psychoanalysis has taught us to look for personal constrictions in three general areas: love, work, and play. In all three areas feminist men regularly report feeling a lack of power and vitality. Many a feminist man is unable to stand up to a woman just when they both need him to. Or the man's lack of vitality might be reflected in his inability to come forth with his feelings and desires. Often the problem surfaces in the emotional turmoil of one or more of the couple's children. For instance, the father—whether living with the mother or divorced—might make a habit of bowing to the mother's will, which leaves the child to experience his father as passive or absent, and his mother as controlling. The man's inability to express his power with the woman is passed on as a problem to another generation. Alternatively, the single man's difficulties finding a partner might be related to the idea that, once he commits himself to a relationship, the partner will gain control of him and he will lose his personal freedom as well as his sense of identity.

The lack of vitality in the work arena is often less visible, the man being competent enough and complaining little about his dissatisfactions. Only when problems get entirely out of hand—for instance, with a business failure, bankruptcy, layoff, or stress-induced ulcer—only then do these men consult a therapist about their work life. They tend to be quite bright and talented and, on the surface at least, seem to have achieved quite a bit in their lives. But on closer examination it becomes apparent they have not achieved all that they might, or all they might wish. It turns out they have been holding themselves back. Again, the most notable symptom of the malaise is a certain lack of vigor, or edge.

For many men it is the third area, play, that is the most problematic. It is also the lowest priority. Some feminist men, especially those with a busy career and young children at home, state categorically that they have no time to play. Others complain they have forgotten how to play. Often these men link their inability to play with their lack of friends—"there is no one to play with."

Feminist men, of course, do not have a monopoly on this set of problems. But why do these particular problems arise so regularly in men who are committed to the struggle for equality between the sexes?

Poet Robert Bly, in a 1982 interview in *New Age,* addresses the problems of feminist men, beginning with a description of the "soft males" of the seventies:

> They're lovely, valuable people—I like them—and they're not interested in harming the earth, or starting wars, or working for corporations. There's something favorable toward life in their whole general mood and style of living. But something's wrong. Many of these men are unhappy. There's not much energy in them. They are life-preserving, but not exactly *life-giving.* And why is it you often see these men with strong women who positively radiate energy?

Bly believes that the man who wishes to be liberated from the bonds of the traditional (macho) male image must traverse two further stages of adult development: first he must get in touch with his feminine side, his "interior woman," and second he must get in touch with the wild man inside him, the "deep male." According to Bly, the soft male—his description fits the feminist male, though I prefer the latter term because it lacks the negative connotation—has traversed the first stage but not the second. In order to accomplish the second step, the man must resolve certain issues with his father and go to other men for help finding his way. Men need to acknowledge their fathers if they are satisfied with the way they were raised; if their fathering was not optimal they need to grieve for the father they never had and then make amends with the disappointing one who exists; or, if their father is dead, they can forgive him for his shortcomings and honor his memory.

I agree with Bly that there is another step beyond feminism for the man who would be liberated, and I agree that men must talk to other men about this,

not just to women. But I do not think it is merely a matter of getting in touch with the "wild man" within. And despite Bly's important contribution to the male quest for individuation and wholeness, I am concerned about certain implications of his approach.

In his meetings with groups of men around the country, Bly rarely mentions women except to accuse mothers of smothering their sons. Juxtaposing this observation with his emphasis on forgiving the errant father, it seems fair to conclude there is a significant bias against women. When asked by Bill Moyers in a recent television interview if the phenomenon of men's gatherings in the eighties and nineties is not an outgrowth of the women's movement of the sixties and seventies, Bly makes light of Moyers's suggestion and insists the men's movement developed independently of the women's. His refusal to acknowledge the debt the men's movement owes the women's, like his tendency to devalue women and motherhood, may reflect a need on his part to minimize the role of women in men's lives; at least there are signs of a very old male tendency to compensate for feelings of inadequacy by being out of touch or intolerant of dependency, vulnerability, and weakness in self and others.

Bly rarely mentions the fact that men oppress women, and he says nothing about the need for men and women, straight and gay, to join in the struggle to put an end to sexism. In fact, in the Moyers interview he says that women are unhappy mainly because they, like men, did not get enough of their fathers' attention. What about male chauvinism, job discrimination, rape, and other forms of sexual oppression that are still very present in our society? Bly is silent.

How are we to explore the symptoms of feminist men without losing sight of the plight of women and the social reality of gender inequity? A good place to begin is with the question of why some men are feminists while others are not. Are feminist men "momma's boys"? This often seems the implication of Bly's work. Many experts on male psychology blame an overly involved mother for the adult male's inability to stand up to a woman, his underachievement at work, and his general lack of vitality. Others blame passive or absent fathers. My own impression in working with feminist men is that they do not all spring from one Oedipal constellation or share a particular kind of psychopathology. But the feminist men I have known or treated do seem to share an early acquired abhorrence for relationships based on domination, particularly with regard to gender relations.

If a child grows up believing something that is contrary to the explicit belief system of his family or culture, if he is not sufficiently articulate to put his beliefs



into words nor sure enough of himself to espouse his belief system in any forceful way, and if, when he lives out his beliefs, he receives admonitions or worried glances from those around him, then he develops doubts about himself. The feminist man has had this kind of experience.

Perhaps as a child in a family that fostered competitiveness and ambition in boys he was less interested in competing and rising to the top than he was in being close to others and attending to their feelings. Stories vary here. Sometimes his mother supported his interest in interpersonal relationships while his father railed on about his lack of courage and ambition. Sometimes the parents were both ambivalent about ambition, giving the child very mixed messages about the importance of striving for excellence.

If the boy's beliefs did not clash with his family's, he might have come to grief when faced with the schoolyard drama where he was forced to fight or be called chicken. Perhaps he had no interest in fighting but was unable to find a third alternative. Or perhaps as a teenager he was repulsed by the prospect of bragging to other boys about his sexual conquests and divulging names and details of acts committed. Feminist men regularly report doubts about themselves that they trace to early experiences where they felt very much the oddball for refusing to posture "like a man," particularly when that posturing required that they lord it over others or devalue women.

In my clinical work with men, spanning twenty years, I have been impressed by the omnipresence of a single theme: Both feminist and traditional men view themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as at the top or the bottom of some hierarchy—and, if at the top, needing always to remain vigilant lest they fall or be thrown to the bottom. The man on top is successful, powerful, virile, admirable, heroic, lovable, and so on. At the bottom he is weak, humiliated, impotent, shunned,

cowardly, and despised—a failure. There is a rigid either/or quality to the theme, the man feeling at times there is no third alternative. This theme occurs in men's fantasies; it also reflects an aspect of our social reality. Christopher Lasch, among others, points out that our "culture of narcissism" fosters this theme in men. This is not to say all men view their plight in just these terms, or that all men are obsessed with power and domination. Rather, the theme is present to some extent in the male psyche, and each man must work out his own way of relating to the theme as it surfaces periodically in his life. The feminist man is no exception.

I have also noticed a pattern in the way a large number of feminist men handle this theme. Realizing at a very early age that they did not want to play either role, these men remember always trying to pull back just a little from engagement in male games and male posturing, biding their time and trying to find a path that would not require them to be either victor or vanquished. But having pulled back from the male drama of the schoolyard, the mating game, the beer hall, the fraternity, or the board room just enough to avoid having to play one of the two polar roles, eventually they found there was no strong role left for them.

When, as adults, these men encountered feminism, a resonant chord was struck deep within them. It was not only the obvious fairness of gender equality; finally there was external validation for what had been an all too private struggle to find a tenable stance as a man that did not require one to oppress others or be seen as a weakling or a loser. Feminist men could understand their lifelong ambivalence about power, male posturing, and ambition in relation to an explicit theory of domination. Like an interpretation given in therapy, this adult understanding permitted a man to reconstruct childhood memories—of schoolyard fights or failure to be accepted by male peers because of a refusal to tell sex stories about girls—and this time see himself as a small unsung hero. And now he would gain women's support for being among those rare men who were sensitive and not sexist—the very qualities that had led to derision from other boys in earlier years.

But life goes on, and the hero of one day is not necessarily a hero the next. Women were very happy to find men who respected them as equals and were willing to struggle. That happiness, however, eventually wore thin. The women continued to build their movement, and feminism evolved in new directions, women meeting with each other in various contexts to improve their lot and struggle collectively. What about the men? There is still very little support available for men who relate best to women and eschew traditional male bantering and posturing. Friendships among men remain problematic in spite of a growing men's movement. And men have less capability than women to get together with each other and strategize about the next step, let alone satisfy their needs for intimacy.

Men began to realize that being "feminist" wasn't enough. There had to be a way for men to be powerful without being sexist.

Therapy of course can help us address one of the most crucial challenges facing feminist men: how to reclaim one's vitality and power without becoming a sexist. But therapy is not the solution to all the problems of feminist men. Men's groups, men's friendships, and even a men's movement are also important but not sufficient. Feminist men are divided on this issue. One group believes that just by meeting together—in psychotherapy, in men's groups, or in men's conferences—they can dramatically improve their situation. Another group believes that it is the inequities inherent in our social relations that cause men's difficulties, and that straight men must join with women and gays in a struggle to radically change those restrictive social relations; if radical change does not appear possible right now, men can at least begin to improve their situation by joining the struggle.

Essentially both groups of feminist men are attempting to find validation from others for adopting a third alternative to the old either/or roles. Both groups share the belief that men must talk about their feelings and conflicts. But the first group does not address directly a crucial part of the feminist male's lifelong dilemma—the abhorrence for relationships based on domination that led the feminist male to reject the role of top dog in the first place. As Arthur Brittan points out in *Masculinity and Power* (Basil Blackwell, 1989), masculinity is a relational construct and exists only in relation to femininity. Unless men who are trying to create new forms of masculinity pay serious attention to the power relationships that shape the experience of both genders, men's meetings with each other will result in little more than nontraditional forms for male encounters.

Feminist men need to open up, support, and teach each other, but they also need to know that their grasp on power doesn't have to be gained at the expense of others. Only if men locate their discussions in the context of an ongoing social struggle to end sexism and other forms of domination can therapy, men's groups, and men's gatherings be transformative experiences for men who envision a better future for all. Only then will feminist men feel fully empowered. □

Edmond Jabès and the Excuses of Exile

Peter Cole

In the dense underbrush of texts that now comprise the Talmud and the various collections of midrashim (the oral Torah), it occasionally happens that the rabbis find themselves unable to resolve a particular question. The Hebrew draws the reader along the jagged lines of argument made by the rabbis' presentations and then suddenly serves up the word *tekku* (let it stand), at which point the text abruptly moves on to a new issue. All the arguments are preserved, and the issue is left pending. Literally the word is an acronym for "Only Elijah the prophet could solve such puzzles and problems." In contemporary Hebrew it's used to note a tie score, ongoing or final, in a soccer game.

Tekku, then, is the word that came to mind a few months ago as I rehearsed the arguments for and against the writing of Edmond Jabès—an obscurantist, Egyptian-born French poet whose books I'd read closely for some ten years. What was one to make of this work that conjured simultaneously images of Kafka, Beckett, a Jewish Andy Warhol, and a Hebraic Kahlil Gibran?

The question mattered because Jabès is considered by more than a few prominent critics "essential to Jewish self-understanding in the second half of the twentieth century," and his poetry posits a direct equivalence between that understanding, writing, and "the common suffering." The combination of his Jewish sources and mercurial language, however, gives rise around the work to a kind of halo, and critics typically find it hard not to be drawn into or cowed by his locutions.

So writing about Jabès was a little like introducing a much-talked-about intimate friend to new company. It risked the pathological sort of encounter where company serves as a punching bag on which a couple exercises its latent mutual critique. In fact, I'd been cautioned by Jabèsian colleagues not to air any dirty laundry in this essay. Introduce him, they said, and let people make up their own minds. Most people don't even know who Jabès is, let alone why he's important.

Then again, I thought, Jabès can take care of himself. In 1967 he was one of four writers selected to represent France at the Expo in Montreal. (The other three were Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.) Since then he has gained a kind of worldwide, if cultic, attention. The *New York Times* reviews his books, his work shows up regularly in American literary journals, and two volumes of appreciative critical studies have already appeared in English. Most recently the University of Chicago Press published Jabès's *The Book of Shares* as the inaugural volume of a new series on religion and postmodernism.

Critical response during the last ten years in particular has been overwhelming. The distinguished poet and translator Richard Howard, for example, welcomed the first volume of *The Book of Questions* (French publication 1963, American publication 1976) as follows: "I have rarely been so moved, so vexed, so roused up by a new—new to me—French book. Or by a book making itself into THE BOOK, into fragments of the Law, before my eyes and ears..." The *Times Literary Supplement* located Jabès at the "last frontiers of thought and language." And critic Mary Ann Caws captured the generally reverential atmosphere surrounding Jabès's oeuvre: "The reading of Jabès is not to be made parallel to any other reading; it is irreducible and irreplaceable."

I certainly thought so. Jabès seemed to be saying to me what the archaic torso of Apollo says to Rilke's readers: "You must change your life"—though in the case of Jabès it wasn't beauty or perfection that signaled from the work. In that first breakthrough volume, Jabès creates a shrapnel-world of voices that range from ancient-sounding rabbis to two young lovers who are separated and eventually destroyed by the traumas of the Holocaust. Interspersing the commentary of his rabbis with fragments from the passionate correspondence and notebooks of the lovers—Sarah Schwall (who is deported to a concentration camp and eventually goes mad) and Yukel Serafi (a writer who eventually commits suicide)—Jabès evolves a hybrid form to suit the displacement and paradox at the heart of his story.

A gathering of several characters, Jabès's book isn't fiction in the conventional sense. Riddled with passages of unjustified right-hand margins, it is, for the most part, cast in what looks like prose. And despite its tapestry of dialogue, the work is virtually devoid of setting and clearly not a play. It brims with commentary, but the central text is unknown. Scholarship it is not. The words of Jabès's lovers and rabbis call out to each other in a stark, potentially erotic space of *writing.*

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As with Jewish history and Jewish scripture, it is only in the margins of this text that the book's deep subject reveals itself—in the form of Jabès's project to write directly into a wound which no construction (and no education) can heal, yet upon which meaning is continually founded and dissolved:

> I talked to you about the difficulty of being Jewish, which is the same as the difficulty of writing. For Judaism and writing are but the same waiting, the same hope, the same wearing out.

Jabès's difficulty, it soon becomes clear, is in writing for a painfully contemporary messiah who will come, as Kafka put it, only after he's no longer needed, only on the day after his arrival. Accordingly, sentences in Jabès break surflike into a void of anticipation which the act of writing negotiates. Whereas Kafka turned the fate of that deferral into a mania for detail of the here-and-now, Jabès presents us only with the free-fall of the interim. Reading him, one often gets the sense that these volumes were written in a kind of deconstructionist ink—ink, that is, which disappears not as it's written but as it's read.

One could easily—someone else could easily—read Jabès from this perspective, placing him in critical context, identifying him with a French postmodernism that leads up through Jacques Derrida and draws parallels to the textual tradition of the rabbis. One might also note the French penchant for abstraction, the Latinate tolerance for easy linkage of feminine (vowels) and masculine (consonants) in the language. But this isn't what drew me to Jabès initially, nor does it address my reservation with regard to his work now. I was drawn in umbilically, not by argument; and what the work originally said to me was this:

> "He is a Jew," said Reb Tolba. "He is leaning against a wall, watching the clouds go by."
>
> "The Jew has no use for clouds," replied Reb Jalé. "He is counting the steps between him and his life."

And then, within several pages:

> "I scream. I scream, Yukel. We are the innocence of the scream."

Ten years later I'm still hard pressed to explain why these lines from *The Book of Questions* meant so much to me. I'd just finished an undergraduate thesis on Wordsworth, "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye"—though it was never anything Wordsworth had seen that interested me. "Wordsworth and the Rabbis"? Jabès felt like a lifeline into that between-space where everything important seemed to happen.

At the same time my enthusiasm embarrassed me. *The Book of Questions* set itself up in direct opposition to the concrete American modernism of my teachers and friends. It confirmed the uncomfortable dissociation that made it impossible for me to identify strongly with Wordsworth—or, for that matter, with William Carlos Williams, who singled out a Jabès-like sensation as the locus of "unattached intelligence (the Jewish sphere)," which he contrasted with the sensual values of locale, "the only realities in writing ... the essential quality of literature." Jabès was either writing out of a countertradition I didn't know about, or forging (in both senses) a second-rate tradition of inadequacy. Perhaps a little of both.

Whatever it was, or wasn't, Jabès spoke of it unabashedly, risking sentimentality and humiliation. (The image comes to mind of the poet Paul Celan, Jabès's Parisian friend who is generally regarded as the greatest Jewish poet of the century, frantically stuffing the new manuscript of *The Book of Questions* into Jabès's mailbox as Jabès watched from his window above the street. Celan, as Jabès tells the story, found the work "too Jewish.") Precisely this excess caught my attention, and looking back to the above lines now, I find that they mean much what they did initially, though little in the language itself feels engaged. Their thrust is all concept, but concept that cannily establishes itself at the edge of experience—not central, but essential.

Riding that conceptual edge, Jabès is too deliberate for an expressionist defense, too indulgent for the realist, too naked for the scholar-poet, and too presumptuous and lacking in irony for the Jew engaged in the tradition. Apart from the melodramatic mini-narrative, there is "nothing to grab onto"; pleasure is deferred; distraction is not being employed for the purpose of composition. Admirers of the Song of Songs, for instance, will miss the texture of vineyard and keeper, kisses and mouth, gazelles and mountain of spices. But they will recognize this as a kindred text of longing nonetheless.

Which is the point: the essential wound, according to Jabès, is not Hitler's but God's. It is the wound of inscription, of creation out of nothingness, and of Law—which is always in fragments. Jabès's real blasphemy is not in saying, as he often does preeningly, that ritual and the synagogue leave him cold; it's in his implying that Sarah and Yukel stand for all of us—that in the instance of the Holocaust, history has been caught in horrifying coincidence with the image of creation.

This is the condition that Sarah and Yukel speak of so desperately as lovers, as Jews, and as writers. The deepest wound, "in the beginning" of the book, is intolerable in its essential evanescence, in its inability

to be healed. The very medium of the balm—writing, or Law—repeats the wound at every turn. At the heart of history's most extreme and particular circumstances, it becomes apparent that Sarah and Yukel are only representative—their characters are not "round," and Jabès aims not to reproduce their situation so much as to write into the shadow of their longing.

Without breaking solemn stride (even the obvious wisecrack "Why does a Jew always answer a question with a question? Why not?" is presented with an Elie Wiesel–like glumness), he anticipates objection to his tack:

> You who are Jewish and, perhaps, a writer:
> You will reproach me with losing the prey for the shadow. And, in order to punish me, you will deny the validity of these pages.
>
> Have you seen how a word lives?
> Have you seen how two words live?
> I give you the word of my book ...
> which is the fate of Sarah and Yukel.

The fate of Sarah and Yukel, remember, was to signal passionately but as though through notes in a bottle—to be heard but not met in that hearing. With Jabès Jewish art once again repudiates the idolatry of "representation," or, rather, aligns itself with an evocation of the unimaginable. In this his work speaks for the ultimate value of Jewishness and writing as a practice of ongoing threshold. There *is* a "Jewish" writing, Jabès advises, but it doesn't involve the depiction of life on the Lower East Side, Eastern Europe, North Africa, or Scarsdale. All that is glorified sociology, which he leaves to the Jewish-American novel:

> The Jewish word is word of the abyss onto which the book opens.... The believing Jew cannot go toward God except through the Book.

This Book-God of the believer stands not for tribal election so much as for the horizonlike nature of meaning in the world, revealed only in the bare expanse of the text, scrutinized in its need to depict. This is the steep God of midrashic and talmudic inquiry through principle and relation. It points toward a culture of dialogue and definition by otherness—by what is marginal to oneself and what faces one in a given instant. It is the God not of ritual placation, or Prophetic righteousness, but of a sacrificial moment that exilic Judaism shifts onto prayer and endless, obligatory interpretation in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. To clinch the infinity of this deity, Jabès will tell you that He does not even exist—though here it becomes helpful to graft onto the fictional plot some of what we know about Jabès's own story.

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Jabès was born in Cairo in 1912 and raised in a well-to-do, assimilated Jewish family in the city's French-speaking community. With the exception of several student years in France, he remained in Egypt until 1956, when the Suez Crisis forced him out of the country along with most of the Egyptian Jews. Not more than a few days after arriving in Paris with his wife and children, Jabès reports in *The Book of Questions,* he saw, as it were, the writing on the wall—literally, two graffiti: *Mort aux juifs* (Death to the Jews) and, in English, *Jews Go Home.* He quickly located *mot* (word) within *mort,* and refuge was confirmed as the embodiment of paradox.

Shortly after settling in the city, Jabès published a large collection of the work he'd completed in Egypt, *Je bâtis ma demeure* (I Build My Dwelling). The poems in this book show the marked and often surrealist influence of Jabès's models—Paul Eluard, René Char, and, most importantly, his mentor Max Jacob, a French Jew who converted to Catholicism in his thirties and died at the age of forty-seven in a German concentration camp at Drancy. From early on, the work of Jacob—an eccentric, devout, promiscuously homosexual painter-poet—is marked by knowledge of the aphorism, the word from the horizon. This is important for an understanding of Jabès because Jacob both set a standard for his disciple and exemplified a way of writing that history and temperament would force Jabès to circumscribe.

> Descriptive style = scientific style. The very opposite of poetry.
>
> The Shaft which passed through the breast of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the arrow pointing the way ideas take to become valid....
> I think you understand me. *Make it descend.*

Jacob is full of advice of this sort, often contradictory. Only work that has passed "through the abyss of the serious" will last, he states; yet his Trinity consisted of Amour, Confession, and Burlesque. He was at his most beautiful—"Condition for Beauty: that it should be within you"—in the prose poem.

Following the aphoristic lead of his mentor, Jabès had begun in *Je bâtis ma demeure* (1959) with poor imitations of Jacob: "At every syllable, the reader's eye takes the risk of provoking a fire." But history turned Jabès back into that fire, forcing him through the sieve of the Holocaust and raising him exponentially to a multiple power of exile. In the seven-volume *Book of Questions* and several subsequent works (gracefully translated by Rosemarie Waldrop), he emerges with neither the integrated aesthetic of Jacob nor the structure of Jacob's religious observance. He is what the Jewish mystics refer to as "a naked soul."

The words of Jabès's lovers and rabbis call out to each other in a stark, potentially erotic space of writing.

To the extent that it was possible in Paris circa 1960 to say anything through Judaism, a Judaism Jabès was confronted with on all sides and in which his secular, literary faith now lay, it would have to run the risk of seriousness untempered by any specific integration of place: "Hope: the following page. Do not close the book." While Jabès rarely provides the pleasure, the black comedy, or the aesthetic counterpoint of his teacher, what he loses to solemnity he gains in clarifying his faith in the *via negativa* of the Name:

> Within the word *oeil,* "eye," there is the word *loi,* "law." Every look contains the law.
>
> . . .
>
> Suppose that God was never anything but the future and past of a book, an eye, a sign, and, especially, the four erased letters of His name.
>
> . . .
>
> Writing is followed and heard up to the point where it stops being writing and becomes the deep sense of a passionate deletion.

If in the wake of these deletions much in Jabès's questioning does not seem up to modernist snuff, it's worth pointing out that neither does much of what we get in the Book of Psalms, which likewise relies on a subtle alternation between generalized, spiritual nouns and typical situations on the one hand, and moments of acute personal utterance on the other. Likewise, if a good deal of Jabès's metaphor seems stale, it might help to remember that in the process of image-making it is the making—the marginalizing aspect of self and experience—that interests Jabès, not the perfection, or completion, of the icon.

But the complaints with Jabès go deeper. Many readers—myself included—simply find something specious in the work, a false contract of sorts that promises to take the reader beyond the literary, only to deliver him or her into a room full of mirrors wherein the word "promise" is reflected to a cheap, characterless infinity or, worse, to one full of self-styled rabbinic deconstructionists. While an interesting (and stifling) case has been made for the authentic nature of the latter and the undeniably powerful effect of the former, the disappointment is real, for one's longing has been neither unpacked nor cathartically rendered in context; it is simply pointed to, with numbing, even sloppy, insistence. And this, it turns out, is the work's primary accomplishment.

No matter how effectively visceral or "emotional" that accomplishment is, one grows numb in the wake of the work's evasive vocabulary of opposites, its generalized pronouncements that factor attention (Kafka's "natural prayer of the soul") out of Jabès's questioning. The shadow-scream of writing acknowledged, I find myself asking about the *quality* of Jabès's emotion, its capacity to sustain as well as negate or disturb. Moreover, because his work rests equally on the three dimensions of his theme—Jewishness, Writing, and Exile—reading it requires that we weigh each of the terms carefully, regardless of their metaphorical nature; a misleading treatment of one dimension would automatically throw the entire project into doubt. It's here that readers begin to defect.

If the Bible tells us anything (and the rabbis agree that its many books tell us many things) it is that exile is basic to our condition and our language, but only as part of a primary and complicated dialectic of creation. The unknowable God whose exilic epithet is "The Place" can be imagined, as Jabès says, only through the book and its exceedingly particular chain of interpreters down through the ages.

But it seems to me essential to keep in mind that the book originally in question consists of repeated attempts to establish a relation between the concepts of "place" and "book." From Genesis on through Chronicles II, the Israelites crisscross the Holy Land in a series of visions, victories, disasters, and blunders of staggering dimension. What lends the text power, apart from what

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The Workshop and the Wasteland

Jonathan Wilson

I recently returned from the first Jerusalem poetry festival. It was early spring in the city, lemons on the lemon trees, almonds in blossom, that sort of thing. It was exhilarating. I got a bigger sensual buzz in five minutes at the market in Mahane Yehuda than I've had in five years settled in the Boston 'burbs. But enough, as they say, about me. The poetry's the thing, the poetry and, of course, the politics.

Mishkenot Sha'ananim, which is a kind of Yaddo overlooking the Hinnom Valley, assembled more than sixty poets, thirty from Israel and the rest from abroad. Among the Israelis were three Israeli Arabs—among those from abroad, three Palestinians representing the "West Bank," which was listed as a "country." Soon after the festival began, the "West Bankers" withdrew. They claimed that a verbal agreement with the festival organizers to have them listed as coming from "Palestine" had been broken.

Each poet received approximately ten minutes' reading time. As they read, translations appeared in English on a large screen behind their backs, then the poems were read in Hebrew by Israeli Arab actors from the Haifa Theater Company. The Israeli Arab poets read explicit and slightly less explicit political stuff. They received ovations from the audience. The audience was largely left-leaning, composed of what the Gush Emunim character in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* nastily calls "nicies and goodies"—academics, literati, media people.

Many nations, including the Soviet Union, China, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, were represented by two or three poets, but the United States had only one, Robert Creeley. This was because two invited Americans had refused to come. At one of the afternoon discussion sessions the Czech poet Miroslav Holub was asked if he thought the American Left was naive. He said, "Yes."

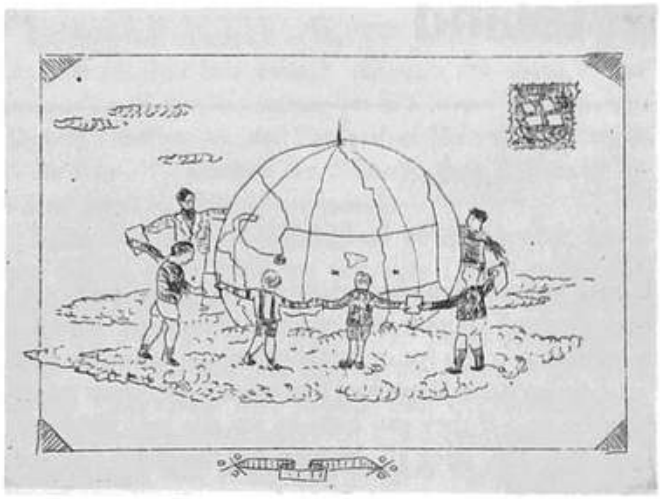
The big question that a poetry festival might answer is "What's going on in world poetry?" In the long run this might even turn out to be a bigger question than "What's going on in Jerusalem?" In his blurb for the festival program Yehuda Amichai wrote, "In our world, in which ideologies break down and values collapse and words constantly change, poetry has stayed, as always, the great hope for peace and peace of mind for all human beings." Amichai's rhetoric has an old-fashioned ring; Auden's "poetry makes nothing happen" seems a more fitting credo for our deconstructed universe. And yet, Salman Rushdie proved that poetry can make things happen, and if they can happen for the bad then perhaps they can, after all, happen for the good—hence, Vaclav Havel.

Most baby-boomer poetry gets written in the comfort zone.

Back home, despite the presence of all us nicies and goodies (including the Jerusalem-avoiding poets with their perfectly intact anti-Zionist credentials), we're clearly closer to persecuting Salman than electing Vaclav. The post-Mapplethorpe situation is dire. "In my country," said Barbara Walters in one of her excruciating interviews, "people are suspicious of writers and intellectuals like yourself, President Havel. We think that they are weak." Havel shrugged. "Some are weak and some are strong." Barbara was simply restating the old formula: poets and poetry readers are women, and women can't be presidents because they're probably incapable of visiting absolute horror on other nations should the occasion arise. "What have you been reading, Mr. Candidate?" "I've just finished a wonderful book by Galway Kinnell and now I'm rereading Elizabeth Bishop," says George. "Really?" Mike responds. "I'm a Tom Clancy man." Bush wins Cambridge.

Some people think that poetry has had it in the States (average sales of a well-established poet, 2,500; population of the United States of America, 250 million; average sales of a similarly well-established poet in Israel, 1,500; population, 4 million) not only because of the crassness of our pop culture—TV, airport novels, and so on—but because American poets aren't writing anything interesting. They may be getting this message from the poets themselves. In Jerusalem, the audience consisted of grown-ups who listened intently to poets who took themselves and their work seriously, and who read without a mediating spiel. They let the poems stand alone, like pictures in an exhibition. At home, as anyone who has been to a poetry reading recently knows, the audience is made up almost exclusively of creative writing students, and the reading is a striking performance.

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BENEFIT POETRY

The American poetry circuit looks more and more like a branch of the entertainment industry, its poets low-paid stand-ups, almost indistinguishable from their comedy club colleagues. Here's how it goes. Before you read, you make a few self-effacing, self-aggrandizing remarks in order to establish credentials: for a man, you have lived in a tough region, the Southwest or the Midwest, or somewhere very cold, Maine or Alaska; for a woman, you are from a region. You (men and women) have not had money for much of your life and you're not making much now. You may, at some point in your life, have stolen something; you have taken drugs but—a wink to the students—you don't anymore (the students laugh, they geddit). You have certainly had an intense relationship with one of your parents. Twenty years ago you had wild sex; you are still open to suggestions but they come less frequently. You have worked in many menial jobs (but we must not think "summer vacation") and so you know well the working men and women of this country. Eventually it's time for the poem, but not before you have "explained" and literalized it in various ways, and raised up and put down your book a dozen times. You *must* make a special "in crowd" joke for your buddies in the front row before you read the poem; this is to let the student audience know from what it is that they are excluded, and how much fun it would be to be included. It's these little jokes, in fact, that make them want to become poets.

What is communicated is a diminished sense of the poem's power to engage the listener and a heightened sense of the reader as celebrity. Think of those celebrity photos in *American Poetry Review* dwarfing the poems that accompany them. Pynchon got all this down in *The Crying of Lot 49,* dull narcissism replacing the numinous power of The Word. The new texts, when we do get to hear them, are noticeably homogenous, while the lives that they reconstitute are generic. Everyone seems to recognize that boredom and a sense of sameness predominate; American poets themselves always complain about the "workshop-type poetry" of other poets and deplore the vanities of the college reading circuit. The real excitement, as I gauge it from my conversations with poets, is to be found in the gossip-and-intrigue department, especially where college jobs and high-profile grants are concerned.

It is worth noting, given that poetry career issues are sexy, a striking absence of the "campus poem" from the work of contemporary American poets. Novelists have never been ashamed to draw on their campus experiences as subject matter—and John Berryman certainly had a good go at it in *Love and Fame*—but today's poets, even more campus-bound than their predecessors, seem worried that acknowledgment of their quotidian reality would lead to the production of poems that are not oppositional enough, poems that would dull the outlaw image honed in the public readings.

I don't offer the campus poem as a prescription for vitalizing American baby-boomer poetry, but rather I note its absence as emblematic of the kind of dishonesty that everyone feels to be present in workshop poetry. Such dishonesty, though, is primarily emotional. It manifests itself most clearly in the contemporary elegy, a popular form which has become a kind of self-serving lament in which the death of a loved one or well-known artist is exploited to highlight the characterological efficiencies of the poet.

There are alternative orders to workshop poetry: the highly allusive new formalism, which might be explained as a conservative reaction to fin-de-siècle worries about things falling apart (again), is one. However, the bloodless High Church writing of the new formalism is no more challenging than the controlled sentimentality of workshop poetry. Of course, and luckily for us, there are more than a few independent spirits out there too—those writing in an alternative tradition, largely outside the sour grip of the university. (And the strongest American poetry has come from the tradition of independence.) But most baby-boomer poetry gets written in the comfort zone.

What is strikingly absent from my generation's poetry is politics—not the politics of the poet as personality, which are always foregrounded (romantic, anarchistic, jokingly chauvinistic or feminist), but those of the poems, which generally eschew the relationship between political and personal worlds. The observable distinction between the outspokenness of a poet in the interstices of a reading and the timidity of the poems themselves may have something to do with poets' awareness of the

(Continued on p. 95)

In 1968, French sociologist Raymond Aron issued a comprehensive study of French workers which concluded that they were happily integrated into society. Only months later, these same workers seized factories and joined students in a revolutionary uprising. They hadn't been lying to the sociologists—they had been telling their own truth as they perceived it in a world where everything seemed fixed and unchangeable. But once students had shown that they could successfully challenge the government on the streets of Paris, new possibilities for change seemed to be emerging, and the working class momentarily rose to the new possibilities (only to be led back into regularity by a French Communist Party that was as scared of revolution as the French ruling class). In 1968 this sense of possibility seemed to disrupt the deadening power of the worldwide status quo, and revolutionary ferment spread across Europe to Germany and Italy and Czechoslovakia, to China, to Mexico, to Central and South America.

Why didn't the revolutions of 1989–90 ignite a similar spark? Political conservatives have no problem with this: everything is fine in the West, so there is no reason to rebel. For traditional Marxist theorists there was no problem either: the dictatorships of Eastern Europe, while they had appropriated the language of Marxism and socialism, were in fact distorted peasant societies that were now, finally, experiencing a bourgeois revolution—and since the West had experienced its bourgeois revolution two hundred years ago, how could anything be ignited?

But for those of us who believe that fundamental human needs are not being met in the West, the relative quiet on the Western front is a problem. Not that the revolutions in Eastern Europe should have touched off mass struggle in the West, but that in watching human beings break free, the possibility of real change might have reemerged into consciousness in the West. It might have energized us to ask new or deeper questions and inspired us to think more critically about the world in which we live. Of course, we've analyzed in previous issues the way that ruling elites in the West have used the current developments in the East to proclaim the ultimate triumph of capitalism and even "an end to history," but it remains to be asked why so little is happening in the politics of Western societies.

So we invited several friends of Tikkun *to comment on the current state of affairs in the West: Is all quiet on the Western front? Why? How do we think about what is happening or not happening in the politics of Western societies, and what should we learn from that? As expected, we got a wide range of responses and ways of thinking about our contemporary situation.*

All Quiet on the Western Front?

PETER GABEL

Every morning, every one of us wakes up with the desire to overcome our isolation and connect with others in a meaningful, life-giving, passionate way. We long for the sense of confirmation and validation that can only come from participation in real community. As we peer out at the day in front of us, however, we feel compelled to suppress this desire, to actually forget about it as best we can, because we have become resigned to the fact that no one else seems to want what each of us wants.

Having grown accustomed to a life deadened by bureaucratic work and family routines, to passing people on the street whose blank gazes seem to indicate an inner absence, we each internalize the sense that in order to feel part of what little community there is in the world we must deny our deepest needs and adjust to things as they are. And so we don our various social masks and become "one of the others," in part by keeping others at the same distance we believe they are keeping us. In this way, social reality takes the form of a "circle of collective denial" through which each of us becomes both agent and victim of an infinitely rotating system of social alienation. Trapped in this alienation, people in the West are often unable to imagine themselves acting to change things, no matter how deeply they may desire a different kind of world.

Whatever the cultural context in which they arise,

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social movements are in significant part attempts to overcome this circle of denial, to replace alienation and distance with connection and solidarity. The very idea of "movement" suggests this, since no one physically moves anywhere. What "moves" is social desire itself, as it partially breaks free of the denial that has enveloped it. People "take to the streets" with a new feeling of mutual empowerment and possibility, instead of consigning each other to the sidewalk where they (we) feel weighed down by a world that seems to be going on outside of us—a hallucination that results from our collective feeling of powerlessness and passivity.

But it is very difficult for a social movement to "arise," for reasons that go beyond the mere power of everyday roles and routines per se. To understand why there is no true social movement in the United States today, we must understand both the elaborate social mechanisms we have set up to prevent us from fully recognizing and confirming each other, and the psychological scars—dating from our earliest childhood—that undermine our ability and even our motivation to do so.

Human beings have many sophisticated methods of containing social desire in order to maintain the status quo. One of these is to shape the world into hierarchies. We are shaped by hierarchical pictures of the world to the extent that we believe that our self-worth depends on the approval of a "higher authority" and to the extent that we come to feel that our sense of social well-being and inclusion is satisfied in being obedient to that authority. The prevalence of hierarchies in our workplaces, schools, and families leads us to develop a virtually erotic attachment to all cultural images of authority beginning in childhood.

A second such social mechanism is the media. One result of the isolation engendered by the circle of collective denial is an overwhelming longing to be seen for who we really are—and, concomitantly, an immense rage at rarely, if ever, being able to achieve this recognition. Television, VCRs, and even multiple editions of afternoon papers like the *New York Post* help people to tolerate these emotions by satisfying their volatile repressed feelings in an imaginary way. In watching TV, we can remain withdrawn (as "watchers") and at the same time experience some emotional relief through fantasy by identifying with the images of both social connection and violence that pervade the soaps, real-life crime shows, and even the news. The mass media thus become an aspect of social reality that we have created in order not to feel the threatening need to act on our desire for change.

It is remarkable to see the lengths to which we have gone to ward off the contact with reality that might come from true connection with one another. Everything from the majestic symbolisms of The Law and "organized religion" to the micro-messages transmitted by billboards and cereal boxes ("*TOTAL* brings you these words from the Founding Fathers") works to protect us from the contact we both desire and fear.

If these dynamics were simply imposed upon us from the outside—it was all something that "they" were doing to "us"—we could rightly expect to find many more ways in which people would be consciously engaged in resisting the isolating effects of these dynamics. But the truth is that we all bear psychological scars—from our very first encounters with other people—that interfere with our motivation to emerge from the dreamy pain of our isolating routines.

Families are rarely pockets of social movement, and parents—themselves conditioned within the circle of collective denial—are rarely capable of fully reciprocating the desire for empowering confirmation which emanates from the soul of every newborn child. So they inevitably transmit to us a sense of self that has a small hole in it, a hole that exerts a drag upon our capacity for building a more meaningful social world.

Before we speak our first words, we come to sense that in order to remain "with" these others who are the first to hold us and shape us by their sight, we must accept the boundaries of what is possible. This notion of the "possible" is communicated to us through the sense of loss and compromise that others have come to feel. And as we grow up, we become partly addicted to the poignancy and depression that accompanies this memory of loss, because these painful emotions allow us continually to relive our initial bond with our parents in the face of a world that seems to offer us little possibility of a deeper and more fulfilling form of community. The paradox is that these early attachments tend to reinforce the circle of collective denial and thus make it difficult for such a community to come into being.

There are, of course, many specific historical and cultural factors that account for the present quiet on the Western front, but mere historical analysis will not get us far. Unless new social movements find a way of addressing the psychological and social dynamics that inhibit us from developing a confidence in each other more powerful than our dependency on the status quo, any political activity is likely to fail, even if in the process it is successful in bringing about important economic or political reforms. We need to stop thinking of social change simply in terms of fighting for more economic benefits or more legal rights, and focus instead on developing new forms of activism that can overcome the doubt in our own hearts. □

TODD GITLIN

Why is the whole of the Left no greater than the sum of its single-issue, single-constituency parts?

My sketch of an answer starts with the observation that, for the better part of two centuries after the French Revolution, "Left" referred to a universalist politics—a belief in rights that flow from membership in the universal category of humanity. Men and women of the Left opposed slavery in the name of the rights of the person. So did they oppose war, the exploitation of labor, the forced labor of children, the subordination of women and racial minorities. Marxism followed in this tradition. A purely deductive scheme, it dissolved differences into the universal category of labor. Capitalism, it argued, was the grand solvent of difference. Marxism took it upon itself to spin necessity into virtue. Was the bourgeoisie dissolving all social bonds? Not to worry! Under hypothetical communism, *everyone* would hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, criticize at night. What could be more universalist than the closing line of the "Internationale": "The international working class shall be the human race"?

Nationalism was, of course, a belief in the particular. It valued the tribe against the empire. The cause of the small nation pitted the weak against the strong and so could appeal to the Left. The universalist spin that the Left preferred was the idea that once the small nations were freed from imperial grasp, they would coexist happily in a league of equal nations.

Meanwhile, the postrevolutionary tradition of the Western Right started out by holding the line against the revolutionary promise of universal rights and evolved into two conflicting traditions. On the one hand, the Right defended the privileges of elites (who are, by definition, minorities) or of particular nations or communities and their distinct traditions. In this spirit, the Right stood for the virtues of difference—the heroic individual versus the faceless herd, the superior nation versus the lowly. Not even Milton Friedman could imagine an international congress of conservative parties ending with a chorus of "The international capitalist class shall be the human race."

But grant the Right its ingenuity. In tension with its exaltation of the few, the Right developed its own universalism—the universalism of the market. Capital, penetrating everywhere, would bring universal freedom in its wake. Indeed, in this utopian mood, the Right has *equated* the universal penetration of capital with freedom. (Indeed, it was against the spurious universality of capital that the Marxist Left propounded the universality of labor.) Since the equation was most advanced in the United States, the Right could logically claim that America was already the embodiment of universal values. Americanism could compete with Marxism on the playing field of universalisms. It followed that the extension of American power served universal ends. And it followed that significant difference amounted to "un-American" subversion. However unstable the ideological mélange, the Right held together. The cement consisted, above all, of anticommunism, along with three correlative values—trust the market (and suspect the state, with exceptions below); trust the police; father (a.k.a. canon, a.k.a. church, a.k.a. science) knows best. As the cold war melts down, the Right still tries to hold together by sanctifying the other authorities.

The curious thing is that over the centuries Left and Right have exchanged positions. The Right speaks of unity, the Left of difference. The Left, such as it is, is content to lack cement. There is no coherent whole, not even a vivid aspiration toward one. We see, rather, an assortment of particulars. Its rhetoric may carry a lingering appeal to universals (democracy and justice), but the practical activity is specialized—in the domestic sphere as pro-choice, pro-AIDS spending, pro-affirmative action, pro-homeless aid, anti-censorship, anti-development; and in the international arena as pro-rain forest, anti-Salvadoran military aid, pro-statehood for Palestine, pro-Sandinista.... On campuses and in common culture, the rallying cry is "diversity"—of faculty, students, cultures. Apart from sectarian groups awaiting the latest incarnation of The Revolution, politics on the Left shows a tendency to devolve into lists.

Why? The scatter of specialized movements is one legacy of the sixties. Many of the upwellings of that decade were generalizations of an impulse toward the protection and sanctification of difference. This fact was disguised by the exigencies of the Vietnam War. If there seemed in the late sixties to be one big movement, it was largely because there was one big war. The Marxist fantasy of The Revolution was a move to finesse actual differences into a reconstituted universalism—one fine day, The Revolution/Party/Class would dissolve all difference.

That fantasy had a pathos that derived from its nostalgic attempt to square the circle. What was happening instead was that the liberation impulse, ignited by Blacks, was becoming generalized. Millions, then tens of millions of Americans were looking for some self-definition close to home. They wanted to find roots, not nondescript Americanness. They preferred color to bleach, whole wheat and rye to white bread. They lost their desire to speak with one voice. They aspired to become not Americans, but women, Puerto Ricans, Jews,

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Italians, Poles, Chicanos, gays, lesbians. Ethnicity and gender became badges of pride. The idea of a common past was excoriated by New Left, feminist, Black, and other historians as a silencing that worked to the advantage of white males. Claims of universality were seen as the mask of privilege. Even establishment institutions lost confidence in their ability to speak in the name of universal needs. Markets fragmented. Where there had been *Life* and *Look,* there emerged *Runner's World* and *Savvy.*

The balkanization of American society, as of the Left, has its affirmative side, just as nineteenth-century nationalism did. The freedom to slip out of the melting pot is basic. Single authority that descends automatically from on high is oppression. So the emergence of difference and the proliferation of identities—of ethnic caucuses and hyphenations—was and remains defensible. The question is: Does the Left want to stand for something other than an aggregation of interest groups? And if not, are we willing to cede national power to a Right that has no ambivalence about authority? For how many more decades?

America today, along with its Left, suffers from an exaltation of difference—as if commonality were not also a value. While the Left brandishes the rainbow or the quilt, the Right wraps itself in the flag of "common culture." That is what it has instead of a largeness of vision. It can happily sit in the box seats and amuse itself at the spectacle of Jews and African-Americans, African-Americans and Korean Americans, Chinese Americans and Latin Americans knocking each other around.

Meanwhile, instead of federating to take advantage of the cold-war thaw by organizing for drastic cuts in the military budget *to the benefit of all minorities as well as the working poor,* the various Lefts have been preoccupied with their distinctive and sometimes competing—dare I say parochial?—concerns. Instead of thinking together about limits to the market as a principle of economic organization, we have in effect ceded economic thinking to the Right. As a result, a marvelous political opportunity has been squandered. Functionally, the Left has limited itself to those who think of themselves as members of one or another tribe.

I hasten to add that the idea of multiculturalism has value as well as tremendous appeal, but is undeveloped, incomplete. Where does the symmetry of the rainbow come from? Or the stitches of the quilt? Just what do we mean when we speak of living multiculturally? On what common ground do we meet to cooperate? I do not know what a Left—or America—would look like if it sought to transcend or honor the differences of its constituencies. I am saying that we—from all our preoccupations—ought to be asking these questions. After twenty years of caucusing, we know where the gulfs are; we ought to be looking for bridges. □

Sven Birkerts

I have recently been having an argument through the mails with a writer friend. An argument about reading. I maintain that we cannot be said to be reading unless we actually hear the sounds words make in what T. S. Eliot called our "auditory inwardness." My friend, a poet, contends that conditions have changed and that most reading is now carried on with the eyes alone—he cites speed-reading and the split-second scanning of newspaper pages.

I come back at him with an analogy: A Mahler symphony is on the turntable in the next room—we either hear the sounds as a backdrop to whatever else we are doing, or we *listen.* I say that if we gut the daily paper in a matter of minutes, we are not so much reading the words as stripping the signs of their designatory sense. That, the poet says, is what we must now call reading. I fire back that without hearing the sounds we deprive ourselves not only of the rhythmic value of the language, but of the cumulative sense of context as well. We are less likely to retain what we have not heard. We do not receive the words as they were meant to be received; we get information, but we cannot get meaning. I say that where there is no contract with meaning there is no reading. The poet calls me an idealist. We exchange epistolary sighs.

What has this to do with our political being-in-the-world? A great deal, I think. To begin with, few people would deny that where politics is concerned we are now living in what Marshall McLuhan long ago christened "the global village." The electronic net now extends over every wrinkle of our troubled sphere; its access and influence grow at a frightening rate. Round-the-clock television news channels bring us uninterrupted flickers of footage—from Iran, Berlin, Vilnius, London, Israel, Guatemala.... The daily press is like a spinning dial, and the revolutions have accelerated to the point where we can scarcely see the numbers. And Ted Koppel is there every night, presiding over the day's crisis like some Druid priest.

One profound consequence is that we—those of us who care to live in the world, or who cannot seem to do otherwise—live with a split. Inner double-vision has become all but second nature. We walk the dog on Elm

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Street, but at the same time we dwell anxiously on the decimation of the Brazilian rain forest. Our sense of enmeshment and implication extends around the whole planet. Moreover, we have gradually—during the last quarter-century—internalized the knowledge that the web in which we perch is being rewoven incessantly. And that nothing we think, say, or do is going to change that.

The awareness of totality brings paralysis, for what energy we have is directed toward the internal balancing of foreground and background. Our very sanity depends upon our ability to hold bits of information in their appropriate matrices. The gas bill is due tomorrow, the Soviet Union is collapsing as a world empire....

Politics, for those of us not directly involved in government, is information. And there is now more information than a human being can possibly digest. Indeed, our world environment is nothing *but* information. Equilibrium is perpetually threatened and must be perpetually restored. Indeed, what *is* sanity if not the effective management of information?

Over the past few decades our place in the human collective has been redefined for us. We are now, whether we wish it or not, citizens of the world; everything is connected, and the fine filament of responsibility extends between all sentient individuals. Or so we have come to believe. The song says: "We are the world." The bumper sticker says: "Think globally, act locally." The new science of Chaos proposes that a butterfly flapping its wings in China affects the weather pattern over Oklahoma.

Our technology has fit us—cognitively and psychologically—into a new system, a new evolutionary magnitude. In what feels like the blink of an eye our environment has been changed. Where once the gaze was arrested by the horizon, it now penetrates every physical barrier. But even so, our biological endowment imposes its limits: we simply cannot process all the information we would have to in order for our global citizenship to have meaning. We are therefore torn. We feel guilty when we lower the gates, when we reject information that we know is probably significant. But then *all* information is probably significant.

If we attempt to keep up, on the other hand, then we pledge ourselves to a kind of insanity. We speed-read. Not just newspapers, but the world itself. Skimming over the words without hearing them, however, is not reading—it gives sense but not meaning. Absorbing information without substantive context, without awareness of the local, human rhythms that give true shape to the deeds and pronouncements, is compulsive and debilitating. It paralyzes the will to action.

What shall we do? Shall we discipline ourselves to be less aware? Dismantle the technology, the densely imbricated electronic systems? We won't. Should we then exert ourselves to learn everything? It's impossible, of course. But we will try, and we will in the process sacrifice what was formerly—and for millennia—the human scale of our sentience. We will, further, redefine our notions of what is sane and what is not: we will learn to think of our anxious and untethered state as home. □

L. A. KAUFFMAN

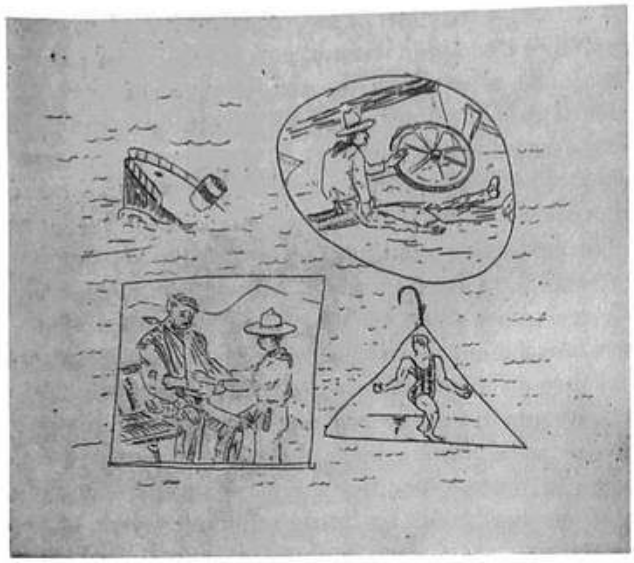
"Why didn't it happen here?" For veterans of 1968, this may be both a natural and bittersweet question to ask after watching the revolutions of 1989; it evokes the intoxicating sense of possibility carried over from two decades ago, yet also acknowledges the painful reality that the movements of the sixties failed to transform the United States in any lasting way.

But the post-New Left generation, in diapers when the baby boomers were setting up barricades, doesn't share the same visceral belief in the possibilities of making history. Viewing the world differently, we ask different questions of it. As we watched the revolutions in Eastern Europe on TV, we weren't very likely to wonder why nothing analogous was happening here, for we had no real reason to believe that it could. Instead, if we gave it much thought at all, we tried to imagine what it might feel like to be there, in Europe, in the midst of historical change.

It's commonplace in both the mainstream media and in politically progressive circles to think of the under-thirty generation as silent and apathetic. The characterization has sometimes been outright offensive—as when Barbara Ehrenreich penned a polemic two years ago labeling young progressives "Rebels Without a Clue," simply movement bureaucrats skilled at nuts-and-bolts grunt work who were incapable of thinking in broad strategic or theoretical terms. But until recently the charge also had some truth.

Throughout the late seventies and the eighties, progressive youth movements were not only small and beleaguered; they were also frequently plagued by

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VARIOUS DISASTERS

a paralyzing inferiority complex, as young radicals lamented having missed what they saw as the great political moment of the century. Far too many young progressives were embarrassed or discouraged as they compared the difficult, small-scale political work they were doing with the massive rebellions of the late sixties. In response to this frustration, many either gave in to a nostalgic impulse to recreate a mythic past they had missed, or became disillusioned and abandoned political activity altogether. The constant self-mythologizing by sixties veterans only fueled this self-deprecation on the part of successive groups of young radicals and contributed substantially to their ongoing crises of identity. This troubled, ambivalent, frequently inchoate relationship to the politics of our predecessors continues to situate contemporary young radicals peculiarly within the traditions of the Left and contributes more fundamentally than most realize to the contemporary political landscape of the United States.

Nevertheless, in their everyday political practice and their explicit and unspoken political beliefs, most young radicals of the eighties have parted company with the New Left, creating an often unacknowledged but substantial rift between the main ideological traditions of the Left and actual, on-the-ground radicalism. Large numbers of young radicals now identify politically with social movements—with feminism, antiracist politics, gay and lesbian politics, environmentalism—but not with "the Left." These under-thirty activists have frequently transformed the New Left's concern with participatory democracy into a kind of anarchistic opposition to stable organizational structures. When they self-consciously articulate a broader political perspective, it frequently is couched in the ahistorical language of "making connections," and not in any of the multiple discourses of Marxism—orthodox, neo-, or post-.

On the whole, these developments have been neither understood nor taken seriously by the established Left, even though the shifts they represent pose significant new challenges to the project of building oppositional movements in the United States. More problematically, the small but significant fraction of young radicals who *do* identify with the traditional Left, however ambivalently, and who see themselves as working to build bridges between this past and the realm of the self-proclaimed "posties" (the postideological, postmodern, post-cold-war generation) find virtually no sustained or institutional support for their work. Only a handful of sixties-generation radicals and only a tiny number of prescient progressive institutions have made a genuine commitment to bridging the generation gap and reconstituting the Left—not by trying to teach young radicals to learn from the mistakes of the sixties (a project most under-thirty activists find terribly patronizing), but by opening *themselves* up to listening to this new generation.

Such a project of intergenerational dialogue has become particularly urgent in the last year or two. There are a number of signs that the stranglehold of the sixties model on youth politics has begun to weaken, and that a substantial cohort of highly capable post-sixties radical theorists and strategists is emerging. Their frustration with the established institutions of the Left is growing: they're tired of seeing the same predictable figures anointed as spokespeople (usually spokes*men*) for the Left; they're tired of reading articles that take the particular experiences of the sixties generation as being relevant or applicable to all.

Will this group of post-sixties radicals break from the New Left as strongly and as tragically as the New Left did with the Old? As was the case two-and-a-half decades ago, the answer is partly dependent on the inclinations of the young radicals. But it much more emphatically depends on the openness of established older progressives to change. The most urgent question to ask about contemporary oppositional movements in the United States concerns not the presence or absence of major upheavals, but the ability of existing progressive institutions and movements to reproduce themselves across the generational divide. As veterans of the sixties ponder the meanings of the revolutions in Eastern Europe for the United States, they would do well to consider what constructive roles they might play in encouraging perestroika here—within their own institutions. □

TOM HAYDEN

At the height of the Czech revolution this past autumn, there came a letter from an old friend. I last saw her in 1968 just before the Soviet tanks arrived. Now she wrote of young people marching in Prague, people who "didn't have our fear because they didn't have our memory" of 1968.

> ... all Prague was marching through the streets bringing flowers and candles.... There were more and more of us, tens and hundreds of thousands and we all knew it was necessary to come.... Now we are full of hope and we know it is our last chance—we have to win otherwise I think I couldn't survive it anymore. There was too much disappointment after 1968.
>
> I'm sorry you cannot see it—so much enthusiasm, happiness, there is also very much fun and a lot of practical jokes. Prague is all papered and labeled with both serious and funny slogans. Now we hope everything will change and we will not be ashamed to say we are Czech. *In a way I am sorry that you live so happily not to have any revolutions....*

The words reminded me of euphoric moments in Berkeley, Chicago, Washington, a long time ago. In a way, the anti-authoritarian spirit of the sixties has triumphed in Eastern Europe today and is movingly alive among the Chinese students as well.

In the short run, these popular revolutions benefit the conservative movement and Republican Party mightily. The public perception is that American policies of containment, anticommunism, and military pressure have helped rout the Communists everywhere from Eastern Europe to Nicaragua. In the near future, however, the right wing will have a major problem: what to do politically without a Communist threat.

What new issue will fill this vacuum? Will we remain a status-quo country, dominated primarily by a succession of politicians skilled mainly at deal-cutting, fundraising, and sound bites? Is anything greater possible? Can the idealism of the revolutions in Eastern Europe and China, based on American democratic principles, find an echo here in the nineties? Or, as my friend suggests, are we so happy with ourselves that we do not need a revolution?

It's rare to experience a transformative moment, when the chances for glory or tragedy are palpably present, when all issues come together and burst the boundaries of imagination and social structure. Such a transformation is occurring now among Czechs trying to rid themselves of the weight, spiritual and military, of Soviet occupation. The sixties also were such a time, when segregation and war were the occupying forces of life here. Between such moments, when milder managerialism prevails, we live our normal lives, participate in piecemeal reform, and wish for ways, public and private, to challenge our hearts. Such is America in 1990.

But nothing is permanent, including kinder, gentler conservative rule. Perpetuating an obsolete status quo breeds a restless temperament. As the cold war evaporates, issues like saving humanity and the environment from toxic destruction are coming to the fore with powerful momentum. The environmental issue requires passion, a change of lifestyle, and new economic assumptions, as well as drastic political and institutional reform. It already has inspired a grass-roots populism with effect. In California since 1986 alone, voters have supported Proposition 65 (the Safe Drinking Water Initiative), closed the Rancho Seco nuclear power plant, and now provided 800,000 volunteer signatures placing the sweeping Big Green Initiative on the November ballot. These have been the most productive four years of my own political life since the beginning of the sixties.

The Big Green Initiative allows California voters to set an environmental agenda for the next twenty years. If we succeed, California will have phased out toxic chemicals known to destroy the ozone layer and cause cancer or birth defects. To remove these chemicals will require modernizing our economy and transportation system to run on a safer basis by emphasizing energy efficiency and renewable resources. California, the sixth largest economy and fourth largest energy user in the world, will profoundly affect environmental policies everywhere.

And yet the environmental issue has not been a major one for most political ideologues of the Left, nor has it proven the cutting-edge issue it should be for the Democrats. It demands new thinking all around. The cancer rate, which is rising among children, should be as potent a political issue as the inflation rate has been in elections past. The pollution threat is a national and global security issue. The very idea of more pollution as "inevitable" has to be challenged as monarchy, slavery, and male supremacy have been challenged in the past, and then dumped in the intellectual dustbin of history.

Perhaps the environment has been construed by some as an elitist or limited issue, affecting only Yuppies and sixties refugees. But nowhere are toxics more dangerous than in the workplace, and no workplaces are more poisonous than the mines of South Africa or the factories of Eastern Europe. Poor people and racial minorities suffer the deadly effects of pollution more than anyone. So, too, conflicts like those of the Middle East

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California State Assemblyman Tom Hayden (Democrat–West Los Angeles) chairs the campaign committee for the Big Green Initiative on the November California ballot.

are insoluble without addressing resource questions. Massive death and destruction can happen slowly, through global warming, without a nuclear holocaust. And there simply will be no meaningful models of global economic growth, whether socialist or capitalist, unless environmental protection becomes a cornerstone instead of an afterthought.

I make no predictions about protests or revolutions to come, but I do suggest that the battle between the competing ideologies of the age of industrial exploitation have not prepared us for the threat to the planet that lies just ahead. We need changes like those alive in Prague, changes in the way we think and live. □

Stanley Aronowitz

The collapse of the authoritarian Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the rise of democratic movements throughout the region was generally welcomed by ordinary people of nearly all ideological and political tendencies in the United States. All except two. The Right, especially the Bush administration, maintained a discreet silence for months, proclaiming the need for caution in order to protect the recent warming of U.S.-Soviet relations. And some elements on the Left—ever suspicious of "liberal bourgeois democracy"—adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward many of the Eastern European movements for whom "socialism" had become a symbol of the corrupt political systems they were attempting to overturn. While Western Europeans responded with excited anticipation to the end of the cold war, the politically active population in the United States remained confused by what was happening.

The major reason for postwar caution on the Left is that leftists have long been identified with the peace movement. For decades—even in the sixties—American progressives labored to persuade their fellow citizens that the Soviets wanted and needed peace and that the two contending economic and political systems could coexist. The prevailing idea was live and let live, from which followed left-wing anti-interventionism and pacifism. The upheavals in Eastern Europe, especially within the Soviet Union, threaten to introduce instability in international relations. Now the political issues of nationalism, democracy, and even socialism confront us, and we are unprepared, for they may disturb the dreams of a conflict-free world.

While congresspeople of both parties disagree about whether to reduce defense spending by 1 or 2 percent, the rest of us are embroiled in problems such as crime, abortion rights, taxes, and the homeless. Yet, with the notable exception of workers, women, and people of color—all of whom have experienced sharp curtailments in their democratic freedoms and living standards in the past several years—middle America seems more concerned about the Japanese threat to U.S. economic hegemony than about challenges to human rights here and abroad or the deterioration of the national economy.

Even more disturbing, the public discourse concerning the decline of American democratic institutions remains muted. The few vocal exceptions—the feminist movement, which has succeeded in putting abortion on the 1989-90 legislative and political agendas, and the civil rights organizations, which may restore by congressional legislation elements of affirmative action taken away by recent Supreme Court decisions—have not seized on the Eastern European example to strengthen their respective arguments.

In the 1960s the anti-Vietnam War movement took on the aura of internationalism as a significant fraction of its great legions departed from the isolationist tone of much of the protest and (mistakenly) identified itself with the national liberation forces.

After the war, it became increasingly evident that the goals and practices of national liberation and those of democracy were quite separate, and that nearly all of the anti-imperialist movements harbored one form of vanguardism or another. The organized Left (except for the relatively small enclaves of democratic socialism) became increasingly disillusioned and fragmented over complex and confusing international developments. One large contingent of the New Left was forced to surrender its utopian Maoist beliefs when the Great Man died and his successors tried to combine economic liberalism with the one-party state. And, needless to say, the Cambodia tragedy served as a grim reminder of the distance between human rights and anti-imperialism. Nor did the fate of Vietnam provide comfort to those who had so fervently shouted "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF Is Going to Win." The seventies and early eighties were years of retreat for the American Left, years when not even the blatant U.S. aggression in Central America succeeded in arousing more than a minority of radicals.

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All of this has conspired, unevenly, to disarm the American Left in the wake of the sea changes in Eastern Europe. In a word, we have suffered a crisis of confidence. Beyond the banalities, we no longer know what we believe. When we have not enclosed ourselves entirely in private life, we fight locally in schools, on health care issues, and, somewhat more globally, in ecological struggles. These things the Left has always done. We are superb organizers when consensus exists. But the American Left has never distinguished itself by its intellectual originality, so when waves of change roll over us, our first impulse is to drown.

The bare truth is that Marxism, not to mention Marxism-Leninism, has proven an imperfect, not to say useless, guide to the contemporary political situation. The changes in Eastern Europe drive home the lesson that democracy is prior to, as well as constitutive of, socialism. But, as the Catholic church-inspired effort to outlaw abortion in Poland shows, democracy is not identical to human rights. It has become clear that democracy must be wedded to socialism, a concatenation that is surely controversial among many cultural conservatives in the democratic movements of Eastern Europe as well as the organized American Left. But to make these links requires new thinking—and a new politics. As we have learned from recent experience, the so-called "social" issues of abortion rights, sexuality, educational freedom, and environmentalism, realign ideology in the West as much as in the East. We will no longer be obliged to choose between social justice and democracy, cultural freedom and tradition, individual and collective needs. The challenge is to reinvent radicalism on a new model. All we lack is the theory and the political will to make this possible. □

Holly Sklar

Imagine a concert in which hundreds of bands are all playing different music at the same time. Even when the musicians are great, the sound is grating. The U.S. Left has long been less than the sum of its many parts.

Progressives have not yet risen to the extraordinary opportunities—and dangers—of the post-cold-war era. Instead of "Yankeestroika," the eighties closed in the West with the invasion of Panama, which met with less protest than the introduction of New Coke, while the nineties opened with the corporate-sponsored EcoLite of Earth Day.

Unlike many nations around the world, the U.S. has never experienced a Left in power. The establishment political spectrum stops with liberals who would be called conservatives in many other countries. The problem is not just repression, attrition, and co-optation, but self-defeatism: the self-defeatism of leftists organizing as a permanent protest movement without a real belief in the possibility of winning state power; the self-defeatism of isolating peace and anti-intervention work from domestic struggles for change; the self-defeatism of preaching only to the converted and confusing compromise and selling out; the self-defeatism of divorcing issue organizing from electoral organizing; the self-defeatism of trying to change policy through protest and lobbying without also trying to elect accountable new policy makers.

The U.S. Left is overstretched delivering and defending social services on which the government has defaulted, and is fragmented by issue, ideology, territoriality, and competition for seemingly scarce resources. A local peace and justice group says their key grass-roots issue is housing; housing organizers say they never heard of this campaign, much less participated in it. National left organizations can make Harvard University look feminist and multiracial. Post-tokenism rules at many conferences these days: white-male-only panels have made a comeback, women are absent or moderators, men of color get to talk about things like "Blacks and the Left" or South Africa. Anti-intervention work sometimes seems like a contest between rival groups of sports fans. Many progressive funders reinforce fragmentation and undermine strategic planning with faddishness: yesterday Nicaragua and voter registration; today El Salvador, South Africa, and ecology.

Many organizers have tried to build a progressive movement with "outreach" and "popular education" around a broad social-change agenda. Too often this means leafletting the picket line without joining the picket line; or promising future redistribution of wealth without joining coalitions to reverse disinvestment from poor communities today. The Rainbow Coalition proved more successful by using a different approach, a common-ground strategy that started with practical solidarity at the "point of challenge" and opened hearts and minds to new alliances and progressive alternatives. The Rainbow Coalition, like the Left as a whole, does not yet reflect the sum of its parts.

To make matters worse, when we harmonize our

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organizing music at the local or national level, it's not amplified through the mass media. Indeed, when it comes to media, progressives spend a great deal of energy on critique but little on action. Of course, the mainstream media is biased toward those who dominate and define it, but progressives aren't even using the space that's there, especially in local and regional media. More right-wingers get on more talk shows, for example, in part because of bias and in part because they are systematically promoted to the talk show bookers. We on the Left should make media strategy a regular component of our overall strategy. We need investors to take media strategy seriously, strengthen alternative radio and press, and carve out a real place in television using cable and satellite opportunities to full advantage.

We are at a watershed moment in U.S. history. The American public's threshold of tolerance for the intolerable continues to rise as daily we step over more homeless people on the streets and subways, work harder for lower wages, and send more kids to dangerous schools without textbooks, art, or athletics. When people get angry, it often takes the form of victim against victim—Italian against Black, Black against Korean, workers against the unemployed. But the victims have not yet focused their anger on the system. Instead of shifting resources from the military to socially productive ecological uses, Washington wants to shift pretexts, moving from the "war on communism" to the equally hypocritical and anti-democratic "war on drugs."

We have to think beyond the incredible shrinking "peace dividend," and claim the "peace principal." We don't lack coherent agendas for disarmament, economic and social justice, ecological health, and participatory democracy. We lack a bold, strategic, and broad-based campaign to stop the social service cutbacks, create a grass-roots groundswell for comprehensive conversion, and make the 1992 elections a referendum on vital priorities for the new century. □

Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven

The most striking feature of American politics during the last fifteen years is the revival of laissez-faire doctrine. As much as anything else, this explains why Americans have remained passive in the face of widening income inequalities and federal actions that would otherwise be regarded as rank injustice: for example, a revised tax code that takes least from those who have most, and housing policies that provide tax exemptions for the better-off while eliminating subsidies for those in need. Nor have unparalleled excesses of private greed at public expense—the HUD, Savings & Loan, and defense-contracting scandals—excited much outrage. On the contrary, the Reagan and Bush administrations have enjoyed remarkable support, and there is even talk that Bush may make inroads on the Black vote.

To be sure, part of the reason for the lack of indignation and protest is not doctrinal at all. As in Thatcher's Britain, the United States has increasingly been divided into "two nations." If a good many people are doing worse, a good many people are also doing better, some of them much better. Those who are doing better are more likely to be at the visible forefront of our consumer culture. And they are more likely to be the focal constituencies in national political campaigns, if only because our electoral arrangements (especially our obstructive system of voter registration) make it less likely that the poor, the minorities, and the young will vote. Still, these structures of exclusion are not new. It is the ascendance of neo-laissez-faire doctrine that is new.

The policies of the 1980s have been defined as a necessary and inevitable response to global economic restructuring. To survive in a competitive international economy, U.S. business must be provided with incentives in the form of regulation and lower taxes. Taken together, these policies will presumably slow down foreign penetration of the American economy, generate renewed economic growth, and eventually provide more and better jobs and expanded public benefits.

The effect of the rise of neo-laissez-faire is to overwhelm democratic politics by suppressing political options. The policies of the present period are naturalized—as the policies that fostered nineteenth-century capitalism were naturalized—by denying that what is going on has much to do with politics at all. Instead, business-oriented policies are presented as inevitable adaptations demanded by international markets. The argument gains strength, of course, from the absence of any coherent alternative interpretation from what passes as the political opposition in this country, as well as from the at least temporary enthusiasm for "free markets" in Eastern Europe. A species of natural law doctrine thus gives carte blanche to the business community.

But neo-laissez-faire has fatal weaknesses. One is

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Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven are co-authors of Why Americans Don't Vote *(Pantheon, 1988).*

FICTION

Why Don't You Come Live With Me It's Time

Joyce Carol Oates

The other day, it was a sunswept windy March morning, I saw my grandmother staring at me, those deep-socketed eyes, that translucent skin, a youngish woman with very dark hair as I hadn't quite remembered her who had died while I was in college, years ago, in 1966. Then I saw, of course it was virtually in the same instant I saw the face was my own, my own eyes in that face floating there not in a mirror but in a metallic mirrored surface, teeth bared in a startled smile and seeing my face that was not my face I laughed, I think that was the sound.

You're an insomniac, you tell yourself: there are profound truths revealed only to the insomniac by night like those phosphorescent minerals veined and glimmering in the dark but coarse and ordinary otherwise, you have to examine such minerals in the absence of light to discover their beauty: you tell yourself.

Maybe because I was having so much trouble sleeping at the time, twelve or thirteen years old, no one would have called the problem insomnia, that sounds too clinical, too adult and anyway they'd said "You can sleep if you try" and I'd overheard "She just wants attention—you know what she's like" and I was hurt and angry but hopeful too wanting to ask, But what am I like, are you the ones to tell me?

In fact, Grandmother had insomnia too—"suffered from insomnia" was the somber expression—but no one made the connection between her and me. Our family was that way: worrying that one weakness might find justification in another and things would slip out of containment and control.

In fact, I'd had trouble sleeping since early childhood but I had not understood that anything was wrong. Not secrecy nor even a desire to please my parents made me pretend to sleep, I thought it was what you do, I thought when Mother put me to bed I had to shut my eyes so she could leave and that was the way of releasing her though immediately afterward when I was alone my eyes opened wide and sleepless. Sometimes it was day, sometimes night. Often by night I could see, I could discern the murky shapes of objects, familiar objects that had lost their names by night as by night lying motionless with no one to observe me it seemed I had no name and my body was shapeless and undefined. The crucial thing was to lie motionless, scarcely breathing, until at last—it might be minutes or it might be hours, if there were noises in the house or out on the street (we lived on a busy street for most of my childhood in Hammond) it would be hours—a dark pool of warm water would begin to lap gently over my feet, eventually it would cover my legs, my chest, my face ... what adults called "sleep" this most elusive and strange and mysterious of experiences, a cloudy transparency of ever-shifting hues and textures surrounding tense islands of wakefulness so during the course of a night I would sleep, and wake, and sleep, and wake, a dozen times, as the water lapped over my face and retreated from it, this seemed altogether natural, it was altogether desirable, for when I slept another kind of sleep, heavily, deeply, plunged into a substance not water and not a transparency but an oozy lightless muck, when I plunged down into that sleep and managed to wake from it shivering and sweating with a pounding heart and a pounding head as if my brain trapped inside my skull (but "brain" and "skull" were not concepts I would have known, at that time) had been racing feverishly like a small machine gone berserk it was to a sense of total helplessness and an exhaustion so profound it felt like death: sheer nonexistence, oblivion: and I did not know, nor do I know now, decades later, which sleep is preferable, which sleep is normal, how is one defined by sleep, from where in fact does "sleep" arise.

You're an insomniac, you tell yourself: there are profound truths revealed only to the insomniac by night.

When I was older, a teenager, with a room at a little distance from my parents' bedroom, I would often, those sleepless nights, simply turn on my bedside lamp and read, I'd read until dawn and day and the resumption

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of daytime routine in a state of complete concentration, or sometimes I'd switch on the radio close beside my bed, I was cautious of course to keep the volume low, low and secret and I'd listen fascinated to stations as far away as Pittsburgh, Toronto, Cleveland, there was a hillbilly station broadcasting out of Cleveland, country-and-western music I would never have listened to by day. One by one I got to know intimately the announcers' voices along the continuum of the glowing dial, hard to believe those strangers didn't know *me*. But sometimes my room left me short of breath, it was fresh air I craved, hurriedly I'd dress pulling on clothes over my pajamas, and even in rainy or cold weather I went outside leaving the house by the kitchen door so quietly in such stealth no one ever heard, not once did one of them hear *I will do it: because I want to do it* sleeping their heavy sleep that was like the sleep of mollusks, eyeless. And outside: in the night: the surprise of the street transformed by the lateness of the hour, the emptiness, the silence: I'd walk to the end of our driveway staring, listening, my heart beating hard. *So this is—what it is!* The ordinary sights were made strange, the sidewalks, the streetlights, the neighboring houses. Yet the fact had no consciousness of itself except through *me*.

For that has been one of the principles of my life.

And if here and there along the block a window glowed from within (another insomniac?), or if a lone car passed in the street casting its headlights before it, or a train sounded in the distance, or, high overhead, an airplane passed winking and glittering with lights, what happiness swelled my lungs, what gratitude, what conviction, I was utterly alone for the moment, and invisible, which is identical with being alone.

Come by any time dear, no need to call first my grandmother said often, *Come by after school, any time, please!* I tried not to hear the pleading in her voice, tried not to see the soft hurt in her eyes, and the hope.

Grandmother was a "widow": her husband, my step-grandfather, had died of cancer of the liver, when I was five years old.

Grandmother had beautiful eyes. Deep-set, dark, intelligent, alert. And her hair was a lovely silvery-gray, not coarse like others' hair but finespun, silky.

Mother said, "In your grandmother's eyes you can do no wrong," she spoke as if amused but I understood the accusation.

Because Grandmother loved me best of the grandchildren, yes and she loved me best of all the family, I basked in her love as in the warmth of a private sun. Grandmother loved me without qualification and without criticism which angered my parents since they understood that so fierce a love made me impervious to their more modulated love, not only impervious but indifferent to the threat of its being withdrawn ... which is the only true power parents have over their children. Isn't it?

We visited Grandmother often, especially now she was alone. She visited us. Sundays, holidays, birthdays. And I would bicycle across the river to her house once or twice a week, or drop in after school, Grandmother encouraged me to bring my friends but I was too shy, I never stayed long, her happiness in my presence made me uneasy. Always she would prepare one of my favorite dishes, hot oatmeal with cream and brown sugar, apple cobbler, brownies, fudge, lemon custard tarts ... and I sat and ate as she watched, and, eating, I felt hunger, the hunger was in my mouth. To remember those foods brings the hunger back now, the sudden rush of it, the pain. In my mouth.

At home Mother would ask, "Did you spoil your appetite again?"

The river that separated us was the Cassadaga, flowing from east to west, to Lake Ontario, through the small city of Hammond, New York. After I left, aged eighteen, I only returned to Hammond as a visitor. Now everyone is dead, I never go back.

The bridge that connected us was the Ferry Street bridge, the bridge we crossed hundreds of times, Grandmother lived south of the river (six blocks south, two blocks west), we lived north of the river (three blocks north, one and a half blocks east), we were about three miles apart. The Ferry Street bridge, built in 1919, was one of those long narrow spiky nightmare bridges, my childhood was filled with such bridges, this one thirty feet above the Cassadaga, with high arches, steep ramps on both sides, six concrete supports, rusted iron grillwork, and neoclassical ornamentation of the kind associated with Chicago Commercial architecture, which was the architectural style of Hammond generally.

The Ferry Street bridge. Sometimes in high winds you could feel the bridge sway, I lowered my eyes when my father drove us over, he'd joke as the plank floor rattled and beneath the rattling sound there came something deeper and more sinister, the vibrating hum of the river itself, a murmur, a secret caress against the soles of our feet, our buttocks and between our legs so it was an enormous relief when the car had passed safely over the bridge and descended the ramp to land. The Ferry Street bridge was almost too narrow for two ordinary-sized automobiles to pass but only once was my father forced to stop about a quarter of the way out, a gravel truck was bearing down upon us and the driver gave no sign of slowing down so my father braked the car, threw it hurriedly into reverse and backed up red-faced the way we'd come and after that the Ferry Street bridge was no joke to him, any more than it was to his passengers.

The other day, that sunny gusty day when I saw Grandmother's face in the mirror, I mean the metallic mirrored surface downtown, I mean the face that had seemed to be Grandmother's face but was not, I began to think of the Ferry Street bridge and since then I haven't slept well seeing the bridge in my mind's eye the way you do when you're insomniac, the images that should be in dreams are loosed and set careening through the day like lethal bubbles in the blood. I had not known how I'd memorized that bridge, and I'd forgotten why.

The time I am thinking of, I was twelve or thirteen years old, I know I was that age because the Ferry Street bridge was closed for repairs then and it was over the Ferry Street bridge I went, to see Grandmother. I don't remember if it was a conscious decision or if I'd just started walking, not knowing where I was going, or why. It was three o'clock in the morning. No one knew where I was. Beyond the barricade and the DETOUR—BRIDGE OUT signs, the moon so bright it lit my way like a manic face.

Grandmother loved me without qualification and without criticism which angered my parents since they understood that so fierce a love made me impervious to their more modulated love.

A number of times I'd watched with trepidation certain of the neighborhood boys inch their way out across the steel beams of the skeletal bridge, walking with arms extended for balance, so I knew it could be done without mishap, I knew I could do it if only I had the courage, and it seemed to me I had sufficient courage, now was the time to prove it. Below the river rushed past slightly higher than usual, it was October, there had been a good deal of rain, but tonight the sky was clear, stars like icy pinpricks, and that bright glaring moon illuminating my way for me so I thought *I will do it* already climbing up onto what would be the new floor of the bridge when at last it was completed: not planks but a more modern sort of iron-mesh, not yet laid into place. But the steel beams were about ten inches wide and there was a grid of them, four beams spanning the river and (I would count them as I crossed, I would never forget that count) fourteen narrower beams at perpendicular angles with the others, and about three feet below these beams there was a complex crisscrossing of cables you might define as a net of sorts if you wanted to think in such terms, a safety net, there was no danger really *I will do it because I want to do it, because there is no one to stop me.*

And on the other side, Grandmother's house. And even if its windows were darkened, even if I did no more than stand looking quietly at it, and then come back home, never telling anyone what I'd done, even so I would have proven something *Because there is no one to stop me* which has been one of the principles of my life. To regret the principle is to regret my entire life.

I climbed up onto one of the beams, trembling with excitement. But how cold it was!—I'd come out without my gloves.

And how loud the river below, the roaring like a kind of jeering applause; and it smelled too, of something brackish and metallic. I knew not to glance down at it, steadying myself as a quick wind picked up, teasing tears into my eyes, I was thinking *There is no turning back: never* but instructing myself too that the beam was perfectly safe if I was careful for had I not seen boys walking across without slipping? didn't the workmen walk across too, many times a day? I decided not to stand, though—I was afraid to stand—I remained squatting on my haunches, gripping the edge of the beam with both hands, inching forward in this awkward way, hunched over, right foot, and then left foot, and then right foot, and then left foot: passing the first of the perpendicular beams, and the second, and the third, and the fourth: and so in this clumsy and painful fashion forcing myself to continue until my thigh muscles ached so badly I had to stop and I made the mistake which even in that instant I knew was a mistake of glancing down: seeing the river thirty feet below: the way it was flowing so swiftly and with such power, and seeming rage, ropy sinuous coils of churning water, foam-flecked, terrible, and its flow exactly perpendicular to the direction in which I was moving.

"Oh no. Oh no. Oh no."

A wave of sharp cold terror shot up into me as if into my very bowels, piercing me between the legs rising from the river itself, and I could not move, I squatted there on the beam unable to move, all the strength drained out of my muscles and I was paralyzed knowing *You're going to die: of course, die* even as with another part of my mind (there is always this other part of my mind) I was thinking with an almost teacherly logic that the beam *was* safe, it was wide enough, and flat enough, and not damp or icy or greasy yes certainly it *was* safe: if this were land, for instance in our backyard, if for instance my father had set down a plank flat in the grass, a plank no more than half the width of the beam couldn't I, Claire, have walked that plank without the lightest tremor of fear? boldly? even gracefully? even blindfolded? without a moment's hesitation? not the

flicker of an eyelid, not the most minute leap of a pulse?—*You know you aren't going to die: don't be silly* but it must have been five minutes before I could force myself to move again, my numbed right leg easing forward, my aching foot, I forced my eyes upward too and fixed them resolutely on the opposite shore, or what I took on faith to be the opposite shore, a confusion of sawhorses and barrels and equipment now only fitfully illuminated by the moon.

But I got there, I got to where I meant to go without for a moment exactly remembering why.

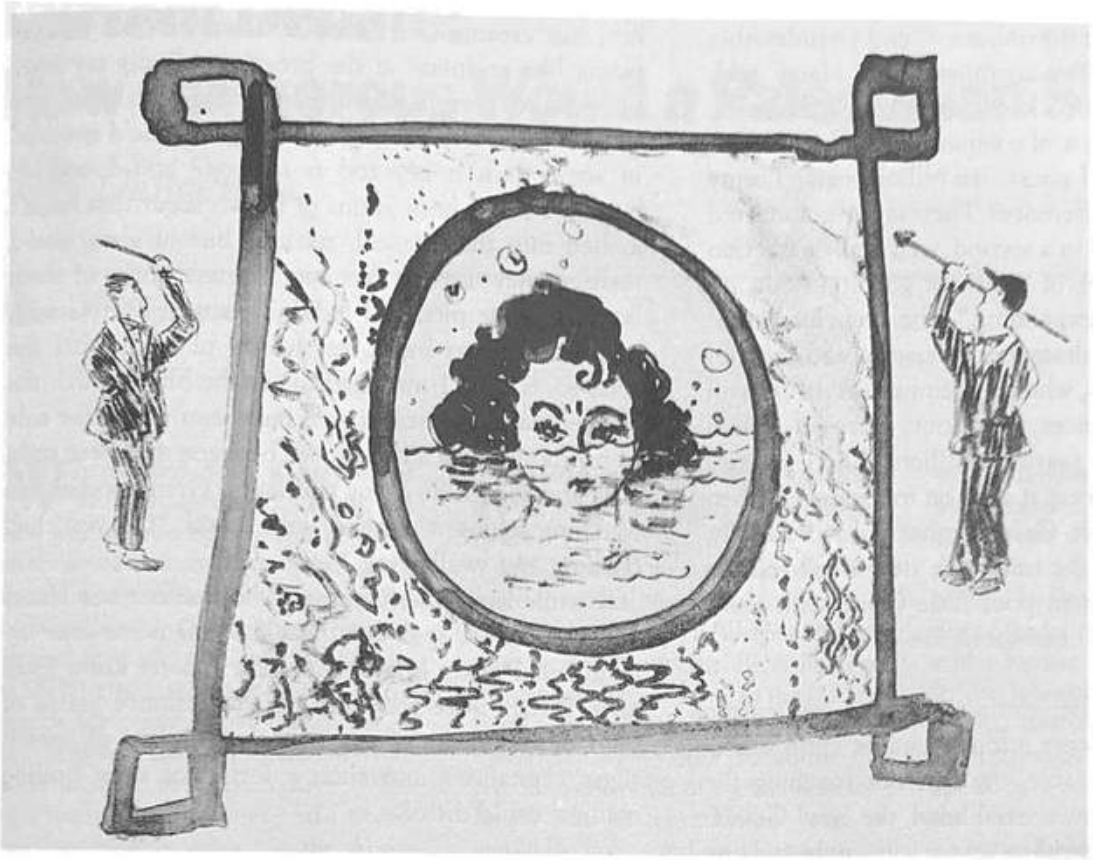
Now the worst of it's done: for now.

Grandmother's house, what's called a bungalow, plain stucco, one-story, built close to the curb, seemed closer to the river than I'd expected, maybe I was running, desperate to get there, hearing the sound of the angry rushing water that was like many hundreds of murmurous voices, and the streets surprised me with their emptiness—so many vacant lots—murky transparencies of space where buildings had once stood—and a city bus passed silently, lit gaily from within, yet nearly empty too, only the driver and single (male) passenger sitting erect and motionless as mannequins, and I shrank panicked into the shadows so they would not see me: maybe I would be arrested: a girl of my age on the street at such an hour, alone, with deep-set frightened eyes, a pale face, guilty mouth, zip-up corduroy jacket and jeans over her pajamas, disheveled as a runaway. But the bus passed, turned a corner and vanished. And there was Grandmother's house, not darkened as I'd expected but lighted, and from the sidewalk staring I could see Grandmother inside, or a figure I took to be Grandmother, but why was she awake at such an hour, how remarkable that she should be awake as if awaiting me, and I remembered then—how instantaneously these thoughts came to me, eerie as tiny bubbles that, bursting, yielded riches of a sort that would require a considerable expenditure of time to relate though their duration was in fact hardly more than an instant!—I remembered having heard the family speak of Grandmother's sometimes strange behavior, worrisome behavior in a woman of her age, or of any age, the problem was her insomnia unless insomnia was not cause but consequence of a malady of the soul, so it would be reported back to my father, her son, that she'd been seen walking at night in neighborhoods unsafe for solitary women, she'd been seen at a midnight showing of a film in downtown Hammond, and even when my step-grandfather was alive (he worked on a lake freighter, he was often gone) she might spend time in local taverns, not drinking heavily, but drinking, and this was behavior that might lead to trouble, or so the family worried, though there was never any specific trouble so far as anyone knew, and Grandmother smoked too, smoked on the street which "looks cheap," my mother said, my mother too smoked but never on the street, the family liked to tell and retell the story of a cousin of my father's coming to Hammond on a Greyhound bus, arriving at the station at about six in the morning, and there in the waiting room was my grandmother in her old fox-fur coat sitting there with a book in her lap, a cigarette in one hand, just sitting there placidly and with no mind for the two or three others, distinctly odd near-derelict men, in the room with her, just sitting there reading her book (Grandmother was always reading, poetry, biographies of great men like Lincoln, Mozart, Julius Caesar, Jesus of Nazareth) and my father's cousin came in, saw her, said, "Aunt Tina, what on earth are you doing here?" and Grandmother had looked up calmly, and said, "Why not?—it's for waiting isn't it?"

Another strange thing Grandmother had done, it had nothing to do with her insomnia that I could see unless all our strangenesses, as they are judged in others' eyes, are morbidly related, was arranging for her husband's body to be cremated: not buried in a cemetery plot, but cremated: which means burnt to mere ash: which means annihilation: and though cremation had evidently been my step-grandfather's wish it had seemed to the family that Grandmother had complied with it too readily, and so immediately following her husband's death that no one had a chance to dissuade her. "What a thing," my mother said, shivering, "—to do to your own husband!"

I was thinking of this now seeing through one of the windows a man's figure, a man talking with Grandmother in her kitchen, it seemed to me that perhaps my step-grandfather had not yet died, thus was not cremated, and some of the disagreement might be resolved, but I must have already knocked at the door since Grandmother was there opening it, at first she stared at me as if scarcely recognizing me then she laughed, she said, "What are *you* doing here?" and I tried to explain but could not: the words failed to come: my teeth were chattering with cold and fright and the words failed to come but Grandmother led me inside, she was taller than I remembered, and younger, her hair dark, wavy, falling to her shoulders, and her mouth red with lipstick, she laughed leading me into the kitchen where a man, a stranger, was waiting. "Harry this is my granddaughter Claire," Grandmother said, and the man stepped forward regarding me with interest, yet speaking of me as if I were somehow not present, "She's your granddaughter?" "She is." "I didn't know you had a granddaughter." "You don't know lots of things."

And Grandmother laughed at us both, who gazed in perplexity and doubt at each other. Laughing, she threw



ELEANOR

her head back like a young girl, or a man, and bared her strong white teeth.

I was then led to sit at the kitchen table, in my usual place, Grandmother went to the stove to prepare something for me and I sat quietly, not frightened now, yet not quite at ease though I understood I was safe now, Grandmother would take care of me now and nothing could happen, I saw that the familiar kitchen had been altered, it was very brightly lit, almost blindingly lit, yet deeply shadowed in the corners, the rear wall where the sink should have been dissolved into what would have been the backyard but I had a quick flash of the backyard where there were flower and vegetable beds, Grandmother loved to work in the yard, she brought flowers and vegetables in the summer wherever she visited, the most beautiful of her flowers were peonies, big gorgeous crimson peonies, and the thought of the peonies was confused with the smell of the oatmeal Grandmother was stirring on the stove for me to eat, oatmeal was the first food of my childhood: the first food I can remember: but Grandmother made it her own way, her special way stirring in brown sugar, cream, a spoonful of dark honey so just thinking of it I felt my mouth water violently, almost it hurt, the saliva flooded so and I was embarrassed that a trickle ran down my chin and I couldn't seem to wipe it off and Grandmother's friend Harry was watching me: but finally I managed to wipe it off on my fingers: and Harry smiled.

The thought came to me, not a new thought but one I'd had for years, but now it came with unusual force, like the saliva flooding my mouth, that when my parents died I would come live with Grandmother—of course: I would come live with Grandmother: and Grandmother at the stove stirring my oatmeal in a pan must have heard my thoughts for she said, "—Claire why don't you come live with me it's time isn't it?" and I said, "Oh yes," and Grandmother didn't seem to have heard for she repeated her question, turning now to look at me, to smile, her eyes shining and her mouth so amazingly red, two delicate spots of rouge on her cheeks so my heart caught seeing how beautiful she was, as young as my mother, or younger, and she laughed saying, "—Claire why don't you come live with me it's time isn't it?" and again I said, "Oh yes Grandmother," nodding and blinking tears from my eyes, they were tears of infinite happiness, and relief, "—oh Grandmother, *yes*."

Grandmother's friend Harry was a Navy radio operator he said, or had been, he wore no uniform and he was no age I could have guessed, with silvery-glinting hair in a crewcut, muscular shoulders and arms but maybe his voice was familiar? maybe I'd heard him over the radio? Grandmother was urging him to tell me about the universe, distinctly she said those odd words "Why don't you tell Claire about the universe," and Harry stared at me frowning and said,

"Tell Claire what about the universe?" and Grandmother laughed and said, "Oh—anything!" and Harry said, shrugging, "Hell—I don't know," then raising his voice, regarding me with a look of compassion, "—the universe goes back a long way, I guess. Ten billion years? Twenty billion? Is there a difference? They say it got started with an explosion and in a second, well really a fraction of a second a tiny bit of tightness got flung out, it's flying out right now, expanding,"—he drew his hands, broad stubby hands, dramatically apart, "and most of it is emptiness I guess, whatever 'emptiness' is. It's still expanding, all the pieces flying out, there's a billion galaxies like ours, or maybe a billion billion galaxies like ours, but don't worry it goes on forever even when we die—" but at this Grandmother turned sharply, sensing my reaction, she said, "Oh dear don't tell the child *that,* don't frighten poor little Claire with *that.*"

"You told me to tell her about the—"

"Oh just *stop.*"

Quickly Grandmother came to hug me, settled me into my chair as if I were a much smaller child sitting there at the kitchen table, my feet not touching the floor; and there was my special bowl, the bowl Grandmother kept for me, sparkling yellow with lambs running around the rim, yes and my special spoon too, a beautiful silver spoon with the initial *C* engraved on it which Grandmother kept polished so I understood I was safe, nothing could harm me, Grandmother would not let anything happen to me so long as I was there. She poured my oatmeal into my dish, she was saying, "—It's true we must all die one day, darling, but not just yet, you know, not tonight, you've just come to visit haven't you dear? and maybe you'll stay? maybe you won't ever leave? *now it's time?*"

The words *it's time* rang with a faint echo.

I can hear them now: *it's time: time.*

Grandmother's arms were shapely and attractive, her skin pale and smooth and delicately translucent as a candled egg, and I saw that she was wearing several rings, the wedding band that I knew but others, sparkling with light, and there so thin were my arms beside hers, my hands that seemed so small, sparrow-sized, and my wrists so bony, and it came over me, the horror of it, that meat and bone should define my presence in the universe: the point of entry in the universe that was *me* that was *me* that was *me*: and no other: yet of a fragile materiality that any fire could consume. "Oh Grandmother—I'm so afraid!" I whimpered, seeing how I would be burnt to ash, and Grandmother comforted me, and settled me more securely into the chair, pressed my pretty little spoon between my fingers and said, "Darling don't think of such things, just *eat.* Grandmother made this for *you.*"

I was eating the hot oatmeal which was a little too hot, but creamy as I loved it, I was terribly hungry eating like an infant at the breast so blindly my head bowed and eyes nearly shut rimming with tears and Grandmother asked *is it good? is it good?* she'd spooned in some dark honey too *is it good?* and I nodded mutely, I could taste grains of brown sugar that hadn't melted into the oatmeal, stark as bits of glass, and I realized they were in fact bits of glass, some of them large as grape pits, and I didn't want to hurt Grandmother's feelings but I was fearful of swallowing the glass so as I ate I managed to sift the bits through the chewed oatmeal until I could maneuver it into the side of my mouth into a little space between my lower right gum and the inside of my cheek and Grandmother was watching asking *is it good?* and I said, "Oh yes," half choking and swallowing, "—oh *yes.*"

A while later when neither Grandmother nor Harry was watching I spat out the glass fragments into my hand but I never knew absolutely, I don't know even now: if they were glass and not for instance grains of sand or fragments of eggshell or even bits of brown sugar crystalized into such a form not even boiling oatmeal could dissolve it.

I was leaving Grandmother's house, it was later, time to leave, Grandmother said, "But aren't you going to stay?" and I said, "No Grandmother I can't," and Grandmother said, "I thought you were going to stay dear," and I said, "No Grandmother I can't," and Grandmother said, "But why?" and I said, "I just can't," and Grandmother said, laughing so her laughter was edged with annoyance, "Yes but *why?*" Grandmother's friend Harry had disappeared from the kitchen, there was no one in the kitchen but Grandmother and me, but we were in the street too, and the roaring of the river was close by, so Grandmother hugged me a final time and gave me a little push saying, "Well—goodnight Claire," and I said apologetically, "Goodnight, Grandmother," wondering if I should ask her not to say anything to my parents about this visit in the middle of the night, and she was backing away, her dark somber gaze fixed upon me half in reproach, "Next time you visit Grandmother you'll stay—won't you? Forever?" and I said, "Yes Grandmother," though I was very frightened and as soon as I was out of Grandmother's sight I began to run.

At first I had a hard time finding the Ferry Street bridge. Though I could hear the river close by—I can always hear the river close by.

Eventually, I found the bridge again. I know I found the bridge, otherwise how did I get home? That night? □

Current Debate: How Dangerous Would a Palestinian State Be?

Very Dangerous

Michael Widlanski

When faced with a perplexing multiple-choice question, the best way to proceed is to eliminate the alternatives that make no sense. In its recent study, *Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State?,* the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS) eliminated one option in the search for possible paths to peace in the Middle East: a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan River. With this study my colleagues and I promised no miracle cures for the Arab–Israeli conflict, but we felt that the restoration of some cold analysis to the debate would go a long way toward clarifying the situation. What follows here is a summary of our study and its framework, concentrating on the ramifications for Israel.

In the latter days of the Reagan administration and with the inception of the Bush administration, the Palestinian state option was raised increasingly as a purportedly viable one. The Bush administration's dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization further spurred IASPS's interest in the West Bank option.

The framework for the discussion by IASPS was not ideological. We ignored the political and religious aspirations of both Arabs and Jews and considered, instead, the strategic and military consequences of various scenarios. In other words, we bypassed the big moral questions such as Does Israel have a right to exist? or Should Jews settle on the West Bank? or What are the legitimate rights of Palestinian Arabs?

IASPS asked a much narrower and more practical question, namely: Is the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan River likely to bring peace and stability to the Middle East? Our answer was likewise basic: a Palestinian state would destabilize the region to the point of a general Arab–Israeli war. Unconventional weapons would likely be used, and Israel would find itself in mortal peril.

Even a "benign" or "seemingly benign" Palestinian state based on complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, we concluded, would rob Israel of strategic assets needed to maintain a credible deterrent to the surrounding states. In short, a return to an Israel nine miles wide at its waist is an invitation for Arab hard-liners to move militarily against Israel. This assertion was based in part on previously unpublished documentation from the American and Israeli strategic communities, documentation which included the Allon Plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Pentagon Plan, and the Ford–Rabin letter.

The Allon Plan, formulated in 1967, represents the strategic thinking of Yigal Allon, the foremost military analyst of the Israeli Labor Party. The formulation by the Pentagon was the judgment of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff as to what constituted "Israel's minimum defense needs." The secret Ford letter of September 1975 sets forth part of America's secret understandings of Israel's defense needs, including Israeli retention of the high ground on the Golan Heights.

Both the Allon Plan and the Pentagon Plan—as well as the Begin Autonomy Plan of Camp David—reject the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan. This is no accident; a consensus exists between American and Israeli strategic communities on this point. Further corroboration is offered by Professor Eugene V. Rostow, one of the framers of UN Resolution 242 and a former under secretary of state in the Johnson administration. In his report, Rostow stresses the idea that the notion of a Palestinian state was specifically addressed and rejected by the framers of Resolution 242, which promises Israel "secure and recognized boundaries"—something incompatible with a Palestinian state west of the Jordan.

The consensus among Israeli citizens is with Rostow. Indeed, newspaper public opinion polls in Israel routinely show that 90 percent of the Israeli population disapproves of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. There are many reasons for this.

Israel's increased vulnerability alongside a Palestinian state would require that Israel resort to a trip-wire or hair-trigger posture, forcing it to strike in a massive preemptive fashion against even somewhat ambiguous threats. An ideological and strategic first cousin to the trip-wire doomsday scenario is the "massive retaliation" school of thought, espoused in the IASPS study by scholars such as Professor Arnon Soffer, a noted geographer from Haifa University who has written extensively about demographic problems. He once told me, "Israel should pull back from Arab population centers in the West Bank and say, 'If even one Katyusha rocket is fired into an Israeli settlement, we'll destroy you. If even one rocket hits Kfar Sava [an Israeli town near the 1949 Armistice Line], then we'll blast Qalqilya [an Arab town three miles away] into dust and then move in and

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Michael Widlanski, former Middle East correspondent for the Cox Newspaper Group, was editor and project coordinator of Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State?, *published by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies.*

take it over.'" In both political and strategic terms—let alone the important factor of morality—this massive-retaliation scenario is even less feasible than the so-called "peaceable forced transfer" of Arabs advocated by the extreme Right in Israel.

Both the massive-retaliation school and the automatic-trip-wire approach are simply too rigid, even Strangelovian, and stand in direct opposition to the kind of *flexible response* democratic leaders must exercise in times of crisis. In addition, given the large arsenals of unconventional weapons in the area, there is no assurance that employment of massive retaliation or automatic trip wires might not escalate into a broader conflict involving chemical, biological, or even nuclear devices.

It is no mere coincidence that many of those who favor a total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza conclude that Israel must base its deterrent posture on unconventional weaponry—especially nuclear devices—combined with "smart bombs" such as laser devices, super satellites, permanently airborne spy planes, precision-guided munitions (FGMs), and so on. But while some or all of these factors can or should play a part in Israel's deterrent posture today and tomorrow, they cannot totally replace the geographical advantages Israel currently enjoys. (Israel cannot, of course, rely only on terrain advantages for its defense.)

Israel must develop its own version of America's strategic "triad." The U.S. triad is built on land-based ICBMs, submarine-based missiles, and a bomber force designed so that the country is not vulnerable to surprise attack. On a superstrategic level, Israel must have a triad based on strong conventional defense, a stated or unstated unconventional deterrent, and internal unity. Within this superstrategic triad, Israel's conventional defense should rest on several factors:

- qualitative and technological superiority of arms;
- continued edge in manpower and doctrine;
- terrain advantages including retention of Israeli control of high ground on the Golan Heights, and the "natural tank trap" on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Our study did not rule out some form of territorial compromise, such as the Allon Plan, favored by the Israeli Labor party; nor did it preclude functional compromise agreed to by the Likud, or the divided rule or mixed formulas such as district plans, cantons, mixed Israeli-Jordanian rule, full or partial annexation, federation, confederation, and so forth—*as long as key strategic areas remained under Israeli security control.*

A return to an Israel nine miles wide at its waist is an invitation for Arab hard-liners to move militarily against Israel.

The trouble with a full-fledged Palestinian state extending over the entire West Bank is that it offers Israel no assurance that some Hafez al-Assad or Saddam Hussein might not force a "moderate" PLO—or even a non-PLO regime—to allow a new Palestinian state to become a base for an Arab war coalition along Israel's most vulnerable frontier, its "Eastern front."

Even if one assumes an unrealistically utopian picture of a docile, newly independent Palestine, one must realize that its location less than fifteen miles from Israel's four major cities and the country's major airport offers an irresistible temptation for hard-line elements inside the Palestinian camp to use relatively low-cost terrorism with crippling effect. Such "rejectionist" groups could create havoc at Ben-Gurion Airport with one or two shoulder-held missiles, and they could have a similar effect on Haifa, an increasingly important port of call for the U.S. Sixth Fleet.

Far from solving Israel's demographic problems, a Palestinian Arab state would itself be a demographic time bomb and invite the return of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians whose energies would then be directed toward pre-1967 Israel. Most of the PLO leadership, one should recall, wants to return to Jaffa (Tel Aviv), Haifa, Lod (the site of Ben-Gurion Airport), Ramle, Majdal (Ashkelon), and Jerusalem—not Nablus, Hebron, and Jenin on the West Bank. Moreover, PLO documents and broadcasts openly invite the support and secessionist tendencies of Israel's own Arab citizens, especially within the Galilee and Negev.

It is only natural that potential Arab foes would try to coax Israel into giving up the high ground on the West Bank and proximate positions in Gaza without a fight. As the strategist B. M. Liddel Mart once observed: "It is ... more potent, as well as more economical, to disarm the enemy than to attempt his destruction by hard fighting."

It may be argued that Israel has already shown itself able to defeat allied Arab powers from the starting point of the pre-1967 frontiers and therefore need not be afraid of returning territory on the West Bank and Gaza. If attacked, Israel would win as it did in 1967. There are several responses to this argument:

- To deter a war is far better than to fight one.
- In 1967, Israel's geographic inferiority forced it into surprise attack. Such an attack would be impossible today due to the scope and preparedness of Arab forces.
- The Arab states have expanded and upgraded their fighting machines dramatically since 1967 and especially in the last decade. They have multiplied their quantitative edge and closed Israel's qualitative advantages in every respect besides terrain.

Given Israel's limited manpower and monetary resources, the threat to Israel from a Palestinian state may well be insurmountable, particularly if the state were to include the key high ground west of the Jordan River and on the Golan Heights. In effect, Israel would become hostage to the good intentions of the Palestinian state and/or its Arab neighbors, who would be sorely tempted to exploit the strategic areas acquired.

Proponents of the Palestinian-state option defend it as a way of increasing the chances for peace and regional stability. According to this view, the "Palestinian question" is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Many supporters of the Palestinian-state option contend that the Arab-Israeli conflict itself has really become an Israeli-Palestinian conflict which, if solved by the creation of a Palestinian Arab state, would be defused. Many Arab states, it is claimed, are leaning solidly toward making peace with Israel, and solving the symbolically important "Palestinian problem" would clear the way for a general Arab-Israeli settlement.

But if this supposition is false, then there is no strategic justification for a Palestinian state. If several Arab states' hostility to Israel has no connection to the "Palestinian question," then fulfilling some Palestinian aspirations will not necessarily lead to a lessening of Arab–Israeli tensions. In other words, creating a Palestinian state may not end tensions between Israel and its other neighbors.

Indeed, if someone were to demonstrate that creating a Palestinian state would both weaken Israel and fail to end the Arab–Israeli conflict, then it would be foolish for Israel to support such a position. Moreover, if creating a Palestinian state were actually to encourage more aggressive Arab behavior against Israel, as well as increased conflict and regional instability, then it would be both strategically and morally absurd to advance the creation of such a state.

Our study, I believe, demonstrated the negative effect a Palestinian state would have on the region. The strategic argument has given way to a moral one because the practical claims for a two-state solution are unfounded. □

We Can Live With It

Ephraim Sneh

In my former job as head of the Civil Administration on the West Bank, I frequently had the opportunity to brief visiting foreign delegations. On one such occasion, I remarked to a leading American foreign policy analyst that, unless there is movement toward territorial compromise, Israeli troops will have to patrol the streets of Hebron for the next one hundred years. His off-the-cuff reply was "So what?"

I was reminded of this incident upon reading the recent report issued by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies and summarized in *Tikkun* by its principal author, Michael Widlanski. This acceptance of the inevitability of the status quo is the hallmark of the analysis presented by IASPS. Not surprisingly, the same visiting American foreign-policy analyst I refer to above is also a contributor to the IASPS report.

The IASPS report claims to be an in-depth academic study of the consequences a Palestinian state would have for Israel's security. But the characterization of its authors as objective, neutral, nonpartisan academic scholars who professionally analyze a strategic problem is a deception. The Israeli contributors (with one exception) belong to the right wing of the Israeli political spectrum. An effort was made to bring together almost all the Israeli reserve generals who oppose the formula of "territories for peace"; there are not too many of them, so it was easy to get them together. The civilians in the group, both Israelis and Americans, are well known for their right-wing convictions. They are of course entitled to express their opinions about Israel's security, but the IASPS report is not a study; it is a propaganda brochure, skillfully presented on glossy paper with striking maps and illustrations.

What is absent from the maps of the IASPS report is the population of the territories it describes. For Widlanski and his contributors, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are merely staging grounds for Arab troops, launching sites for missiles, hiding places for terrorists, geography without demography. The fact that 1.7 million Palestinians live there, and that these are human beings with personal and national aspirations, is negligible.

So much for the obvious. The IASPS team also ignores recent developments in the Middle East, the role of Egypt in the peace process, and changes in the attitudes of the Palestinians themselves. Widlanski and his colleagues believe Arabs only when they make threats, not when they speak moderately. Not surprisingly, the report is full of deceptions and distorted presentation of facts:

• The Allon Plan is mentioned in the report as an example of defense doctrine opposing Palestinian sovereignty west of the Jordan River. In fact, the spirit of the Allon Plan is "maximum security for Israel with minimum control over the Palestinian population." The Allon Plan provided for Israeli strategic positions in the Jordan River Valley while also providing sovereignty to the Palestinian population on most of the West Bank, not necessarily with geographical linkage to Jordan.

Allon wrote his plan a few weeks after Israel's victory in June 1967 and did not include Jewish settlements on the populated parts of the West Bank as part of his conception. The one hundred settlements built by the Likud government between 1977 and 1984 have made the Allon Plan inapplicable and impractical. The principles and spirit of the plan, however, remain the cornerstone of the Labor party doctrine regarding territorial solution, and they are a far cry from the conclusions reached by the IASPS "study."

• Widlanski emphasizes the threat of an Arab coalition on Israel's "Eastern Front." Yes, this is a serious potential threat. But what exists now is a bloc of moderate Arab states that seek a peace agreement in the region. The extremist militant Syria is isolated today in the Arab world. What may help Syria break its isolation and build an anti-Israel coalition amongst other states is a continuation of the status quo that prolongs the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Iraq, with its military potential, is a regional counterbalance to Syria, especially as a backing to Jordan against its northern militant neighbor. But, if an anti-Israel coalition forms as a result

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of the stalemated peace process, Iraq will join as a very powerful partner. In the wars of 1967 and 1973, Iraq did not form the aggressive coalition but joined it during the war. Israeli intransigence—what Widlanski and the IASPS report so vehemently advocate—is the prescription for the unification of the Arab world against Israel.

• Widlanski ignores the changes that have occurred in the region in the last decade. In that time, most of the Arab regimes have come to the conclusion that the ideology which threatens their existence is not Zionism, but Muslim fundamentalism, inspired by Iran. Of the four Arab states which share borders with Israel, Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, and Jordan reached an agreement with Israel about the initiation of negotiations (the Hussein-Peres Agreement signed in London in April of 1987). It was Shamir who rejected this agreement and blocked its adoption by Israel.

Israeli intransigence—what Widlanski and the IASPS report so vehemently advocate—is the prescription for the unification of the Arab world against Israel.

The third state, Lebanon, is not a state any more, but a state of mind. Still, if only as an historical footnote, it, too, signed a peace treaty with Israel in May 1983. Now Israel successfully uses the southern part of Lebanon as a security zone and will continue to do so as long as terrorist organizations take advantage of the chaos which prevails in that country.

The fourth state, Syria, with which Israel has the shortest border, still opposes any peace process, and waits for the failure of the current process in order to regain leadership in the Arab world. Widlanski's recommendation to keep the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unresolved just because Israel's neighbors maintain their animosity toward Israel ignores the strategies of the actual actors involved.

• Widlanski speaks of "massive retaliation" theories which are used by those in Israel who favor territorial compromise. They adopt "Strangelovian" approaches, he says, to counteract the vulnerability of a smaller Israel. To substantiate his claim, Widlanski quotes a distinguished Israeli geographer—a geographer, and not a political leader or strategic thinker. Widlanski's selective quotation does not represent any strategic school of thought in Israel.

It is more accurate and honest to say that those in Israel who advocate the formula of "territories for peace" strongly insist that even in conditions of peace, Israel must maintain its military superiority. Even when the prophecy of Isaiah becomes a reality, we would prefer Israel as the wolf and not the lamb.

The distance between Kfar Sava and Qalqilya is the same as that between Qalqilya and Kfar Sava, and the distance between Ashkelon and Gaza is the same as between Gaza and Ashkelon. This means that the densely populated Palestinian towns are as exposed to Israel's military strength as Israeli towns may be to terrorist attackers. Israel can rely on this sort of deterrence.

• One of the illustrations in the IASPS report shows a terrorist hidden behind a bush as he launches a shoulder missile at a 747 airliner landing at Ben-Gurion Airport. This is a concrete threat, often repeated to American Jews who use the international airport on their visits to Israel. The implication of such an image is, "If we give back the West Bank, you will be unable to safely land at Ben-Gurion Airport."

Interestingly, there is another international airport in Israel, the Eilat Airport, which has been in use for three decades and which lies only one mile from the border with Jordan. Hundreds of Israelis and tourists use it daily and not a single missile has ever been launched from Jordan at one of the aircraft landing or taking off. Are the Arabs in this area pro-Israeli? No. What matters is not the technical ability to shoot missiles, but who controls the other side of the border. A responsible government that cares for its own vital interests has an incentive to prevent such an attack and can do so effectively.

• The report minimizes the demographic problem and Widlanski entirely ignores three factors which may shift Israel's demographic balance: the birth rate of the Palestinians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip is one of the highest in the Middle East; there is a permanent stream of Jewish emigration from Israel, mainly to the U.S. (between 1980 and 1987 the number of immigrants exceeded the number of emigrants by only two thousand people); and the emigration of Palestinians from the territories to Jordan and the Gulf States—an important factor in the slowdown of Arab population growth in the seventies and early eighties—has ceased. Due to the outcome of the Iran-Iraq War and the economic crisis in Jordan, these countries can no longer offer jobs to Palestinians who come from the outside. Even if the immigration from the Soviet Union manages to maintain the Jewish majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, an Arab minority of 40 percent means a binational state. In order to preserve Jewish dominance in state institutions, Israel must deprive the Palestinians in the territories of civil rights; while in order to preserve its democratic character, Israel must add 1.7 million Palestinians to the 800,000 Israeli Arabs who are already Israeli citizens and grant them civil rights. Widlanski offers no solution to this existential paradox.

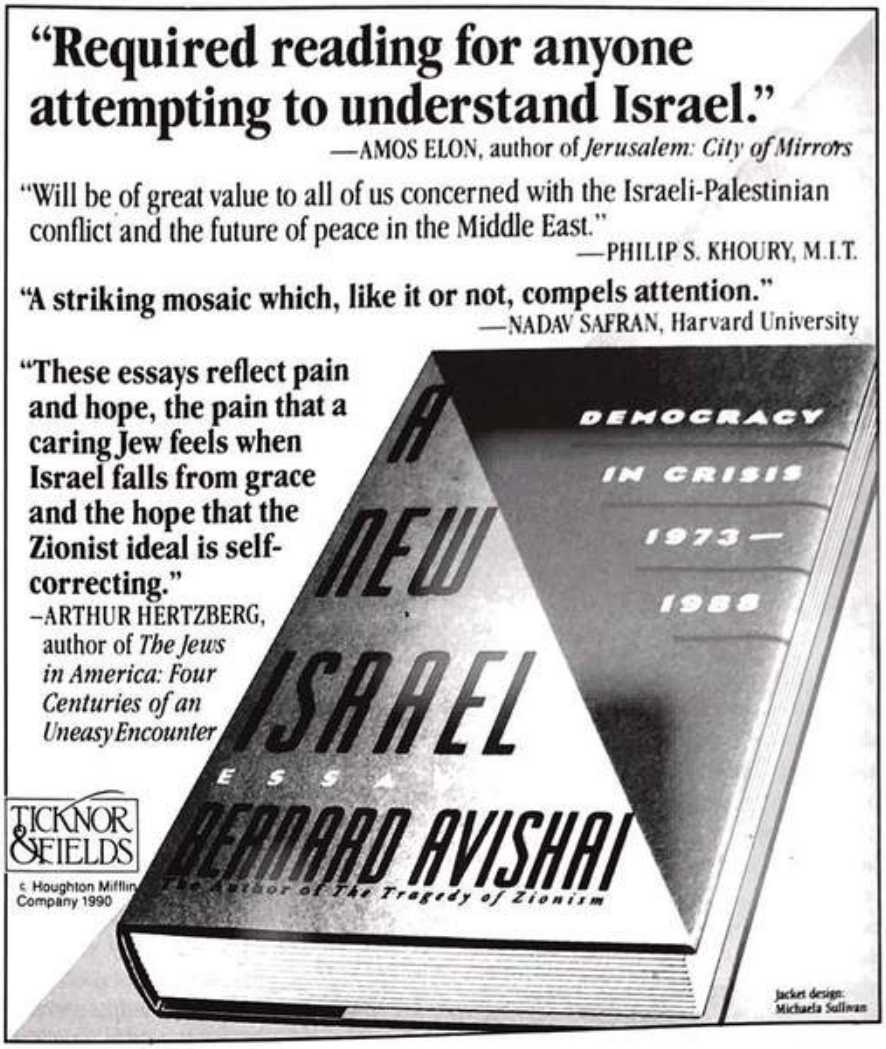
• Widlanski speaks about the danger that a Palestinian state poses to Jordan, though once again he ignores the facts. More than 1.5 million Palestinians live in Jordan, approximately two-thirds of its population. The Palestinians there are fully integrated into Jordanian society. At the same time, there are family ties, shared economic interests, and other connections of the like between this Palestinian community and the Palestinian community in the occupied territories. It is unrealistic to assume that after permanent arrangements have been achieved, these two communities can be totally separated. It is also unrealistic to believe that the Hashemite kingdom can restore its control on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Eventually the practical arrangement will have to be a confederation of the East Bank, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Some initial understandings already exist between the PLO and Jordan on this matter, though what really endangers Jordan's stability is the radicalization inspired by the intifada.

Nothing is more important to us, the Israelis, than ensuring Israel's security within the framework of a peace agreement. It must be clearly said that no peace agreement will be achieved that does not provide Israel with satisfactory security guarantees while also satisfying Palestinian aspirations for sovereignty.

The IASPS report correctly describes the vulnerability of Israel's population, mainly concentrated within the narrow coastal plain. Israel must not be exposed to attack by troops deployed along its border from the West Bank, as almost happened in 1967. The IDF (Israel Defense Force) is composed mainly of reserve units, which are ready for battle only after a process of mobilization. To avoid a surprise attack, Israel will need sufficient early-warning capability.

No Israeli leader will sign a peace agreement that does not satisfy the country's security needs. What are the essential guarantees necessary to ensure Israel's security? The West Bank and Gaza Strip have to be totally demilitarized so that they cannot serve as a springboard for a military offensive against Israel by standing Arab armies, or as a base for terrorist raids on Israel by extremist Palestinian organizations. This demilitarization would be, of course, a part of the peace treaty. Deployment of military forces by Arab states would not be allowed, and only Palestinian policemen would be authorized to carry light weapons.

Verification of this demilitarization would involve Israeli control over a strip along the Jordan River, as well as the establishment of a few early-warning installations if and where airborne systems are not sufficient. The Israeli military presence along the Jordan River Valley would prevent any infiltration by terrorists and arms smugglers since there are no airports or harbors on the West Bank. The only route of infiltration, then, is through the Jordan River, while the Jordan River Valley is a natural obstacle with few points where a regular army might cross. The Israeli presence along the Jordan River Valley would be substantial enough to contain any attack from the eastern side of the Jordan River. Of course, Israel would have the right to reinforce its troops there in case of imminent confrontation. It should also be remembered that in the valley area the Palestinian population is very small, so it is likely that the friction would be kept to a minimum.



The verification of Gaza Strip demilitarization would be much easier. The Israeli navy could easily prevent any military use of the Mediterranean coast, while the army could protect the land borders. Egypt, meanwhile, could efficiently control the Strip's southern border.

Although providing these guarantees to Israel stands in contrast to absolute Palestinian sovereignty, this is the character of the compromise: the meeting point of the two parties' demands is where Palestinian sovereignty might endanger Israel's security. A detailed study of this issue by prominent Israeli military commentator Ze'ev Schiff has recently been published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy ("Security for Peace: Israel's Minimal Security Requirements in Negotiations with the Palestinians").

Schiff's study stands in direct contrast to Widlanski's report, which is riddled with anxiety and projected dangers that seem justified when only the military aspects of Israeli–Arab relations are discussed. But one has to remember that peace—not only war—has a momentum and dynamic of its own. Coexistence and open borders for trade and tourism may create incentives for both peoples to live in peace. Building common economic interests, for example, should be an integral part of a projected Israeli–Arab peace.

The IASPS report is titled: "Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State?" But the question Israel faces now would be a more fitting topic for the next report from Widlanski and his colleagues: "Can Israel Survive the Status Quo?" □

Book Review

Women on the Verge

Christine Stansell

Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent by Dee Garrison. Temple University Press, 1989, 377 pp.

Emma Goldman in Exile: From the Russian Revolution to the Spanish Civil War by Alice Wexler. Beacon Press, 1989, 301 pp.

Between 1900 and 1914, a new kind of heroic feminism took shape among political and artistic radicals in American cities. Its exemplars, the self-consciously liberated women of bohemias like Greenwich Village, seemed to their contemporaries the quintessence of a dawning modernity. "When the world began to change, the restlessness of women was the main cause," remembered the left-wing journalist Hutchins Hapgood. These women were seized by a nearly utopian belief that transcending the womanhood into which they had been born would lead to a dazzling personal and political liberation. Both in work and in love, they prided themselves on eschewing their mothers' gentility and caution to take on professional, political, and sexual risks and adventures equal to those they imagined to be men's. This all came in their youth and early middle age—in the high-spirited years when, as one Village poet put it, the fiddles were tuning up all over America.

Emma Goldman and Mary Heaton Vorse came of age in this world as women and as political beings. But for them and for the others, growing old would be a different matter. The Red Scare of 1919—in which the FBI arrested thousands of socialists, anarchists, and trade unionists and deported 249 of the most "dangerous" to Russia—decimated radical, feminist bohemia. The politics of the 1920s, dominated by a dour ethos of solidarity with the "real" revolution in Russia and by sectarian rivalries between Socialists and Communists, had no use for the anarchist-tinged idealism and cultural avant-gardism of the prewar radicals.

"It happened so quickly," wrote a wistful Mary Vorse in 1926, musing on the marginalization of her old free-spirited comrades by the would-be Lenins of the American Communist Party. In 1931, half a world away, exiled once by American right-wingers and then again by Soviet dictators, Emma Goldman made her own sorrowful assessment: "hardly anything has come of our years of effort." Real exiles and metaphorical exiles: "[S]o much," summed up Vorse, "for my vanished generation."

Goldman and Vorse both provide rich but also daunting material to feminists. How can we make sense of stories that began so joyously and ended so sadly? To what extent did these women cripple themselves, to what extent did a sexist culture do the damage, to what extent did world history do them in?

"My spirit goes streaming out to the dangerous places," Mary Heaton Vorse rhapsodized in the self-glorifying prose typical of the Village feminists. Mary Heaton was born in 1874 to a wealthy family in Amherst, Massachusetts, and raised to take up a position in genteel society (it challenges the chronological imagination to realize that the future labor radical's life in Amherst overlapped with that of Emily Dickinson). Tutored at home and then trucked around Europe, the young woman missed out on the college education that provided an escape route from the "family claim" made upon so many middle- and upper-class girls.

By her twenties, however, Mary Heaton knew that she wanted out. A brief, unsuccessful spell in art school in Paris exposed her to the bohemian life which, two years later in New York, she finally made her own through the person of Albert Vorse, a shambling, vaguely comical Harvard graduate who was taking a fling at journalism while he dreamt of polar exploration and tried to write a novel. Fortunately for Mary Vorse, Albert soon turned out to be a deadbeat, incapable of supporting her or their babies: it was thus that she took up the story writing for women's magazines that would lead her into more serious writing and support her economically for decades to come when the more interesting work ran dry.

Journalism and travel—on-the-spot reporting from "the dangerous places"—became her métier. At the great strike of textile workers at Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912–13, Vorse, along with a handful of mostly male strike sympathizers, virtually invented the profession of labor journalism. Then, after a distinguished stint as a correspondent in postwar France and Central Europe, she went on to cover some of the most violent and fearsome strikes in modern America: Passaic in 1926, Gastonia in 1929, Harlan County in 1931, Flint in 1937. Journalism in this period had not yet acquired its ideology of "objectivity," and Vorse always conceived of her writing as central to her political engagements. She moved back and forth easily between writing for the papers and directing brilliant publicity campaigns for the union movement.

Such was the heroism of the "free woman," but of course there was more. Vorse's private life was deeply distressed, and it became more so as she grew older. With élan she carried through her divorce from Albert Vorse and calmly took up the burden of supporting her children. But after the death of her beloved second husband, Joe O'Brien, a wonderfully genial man who ran the house while she traveled and wrote, Vorse fell apart. Resentment-

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ridden spells at home with her children inevitably circled down into bouts with morphine addiction; she recovered only to plunge into guilt-ridden spells away from home (and her children) on assignment.

The guilt at leaving her children finally drove her back home, and so forth. She passed on her addictions to her children: two of them were active alcoholics, and the family members continued to play out their dramas of dependency, guilt, blame, and need until well into Vorse's old age. Similar compulsions seemed to have drawn her to the dreadful Robert Minor, a domineering, overbearing party hack who was Vorse's only serious lover after Joe O'Brien's death. Minor's cruelties and infidelities so devastated Vorse that, after he left her, she never again took another lover despite her deeply sexual nature.

In short, there was a great chasm between the gushing, self-dramatizing language of "streaming out to the dangerous places" and this anguished entry in her diary for 1925: "Oh, lord, keep me from messing up my life again." Biographer Dee Garrison's exceptional critical abilities enable her to negotiate that distance. Without reducing the magnitude of Vorse's achievements, Garrison carefully exposes their origins in the dark places of her psyche. Politics, she reminds us, can be no less powerful and admirable for helping a woman to evade problems rendered insoluble by her own psychology, her social circumstances, or both. Off for months on a tour of ravaged Europe in 1918–19, for example, Vorse continually postponed returning to her children, whom she'd left in a nanny's care, by turning guilt into professional pride and political duty. The passion she devoted to her eloquent writing about the plight of displaced and orphaned children in war-torn countries, Garrison points out, served to deflect her guilt at leaving her own children motherless.

But there are important questions that Garrison does not even ask. Might Vorse's ideal of heroic feminism have bred unrealistic expectations of herself which opened the way to crippling dependencies and cravings? Like many Village women, especially those who summered in Provincetown, Vorse saw hard drinking as a glamorous mas-

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culine adventure that modern women could now share. Did the masculine hard drinking of her *au courant* Provincetown years, when she felt herself soaring above traditional womanly cares, lead her into the "feminine" morphine addiction to which she later resorted when those cares overwhelmed her? When Garrison does try to pull together an overarching analysis, she tends to resort to clumsy sociopolitical categories—"sexism," for example—which serve to mask rather than illuminate the intricacies of an addictive personality.

Nonetheless, one feels throughout Garrison's work a free feminist intelligence at work, suspicious of orthodoxy and received wisdom—especially the received wisdom on the Left about the supposed heroism of Communist militants in some of the labor battles Vorse covered. Garrison's originality is especially evident in her treatment of Vorse's politics. As Vorse traipsed across a very broad political history, spanning the years 1911 to 1959 and the distance between the Mesabi Range and Moscow, she came to devote most of her energies to the American trade union movement, and to unions of male workers at that. Her story intersects with a long and contentious history of left-wing allegiances and subsequent historical interpretations, and lies mostly outside the female-dominated organizations and allegiances which feminist historians have customarily studied. But Garrison has done a superb job at mastering the issues of men's history.

At the same time, Garrison does Vorse—and feminism—a service by resurrecting her soft, somewhat wispy humanitarian politics and implicitly showing how well they stand up in light of subsequent realities. During these years Vorse was feeling her way toward a political sensibility significantly different from both that of the male-dominated left parties and that of the older women's movement. Like most of the Village women, she was never a heavy wheeler-dealer within the axis of Russian/European/American Marxism. Doctrinaire thinking, abstractions, and sectarian zeal were alien to her temperament. But neither was she drawn to the plump, civic-minded certainties of three generations of American female reformers, the social activism that her generation of WASP women inherited and then largely discarded. From the 1930s, she would look back and characterize these politics with a fine, battered irony: "[W]e came to maturity in what was really for women a golden age.... [W]e had the feeling we were important civic factors who could put in a thumb almost anywhere and pull out a plum, ranging from votes for women to a fine new building law."

In her work and travels, Vorse had seen too much to be tempted by the little plums of reform, but neither was she an ardent believer in the promise of world revolution. Standing at the great divide of 1919, she was resolutely anticapitalist but not zealously pro-Bolshevik. Her great concern was Central Europe. Sobered by what she saw of political repression in Hungary during the short-lived Communist government of Bela Kun, she couldn't look to the Bolshevik future with the rosy hopes of her American comrades. Neither could she applaud the actions of the great democracies, which were systematically denying food to Hungarian civilians until the Communists were overturned.

Starving children and state dictatorships: she decried both, and her concerns marginalized her in both the American mainstream and the Left. Delicately and ruefully, Garrison sums up:

> Vorse's social thought, in 1919 as for the rest of her life, had carried her into the no man's land of political philosophy cordoned off and marked "effeminate," "visionary," "unrealistic." These ideas, together with the few who voiced them, were regarded as peripheral to world events. They were not so much denounced ... as they were simply dismissed by the ruling powers and intellects of the time.

What Garrison makes clear is that Vorse's very untheoretical engagement with her subjects allowed her to sense, however dimly, that there was a radicalism which could both transcend the abstractions of the Left and challenge the hypocrisy of the Right.

Perhaps no other woman personified the possibilities of modern feminism, both to her contemporaries and to later generations of women, more than Emma Goldman—anarchist lecturer, agitator, publisher, and sexual radical. Especially for young feminists of the 1970s—my own generation and Alice Wexler's—Emma Goldman became an honored foremother, her memory a touchstone for utopian clarity, erotic passion, and political courage. Charismatic and deeply committed to constructing a public persona which transcended the vulnerabilities of mere ordinary women, Goldman invited idealization. Thus while Dee Garrison's task with Mary Heaton Vorse was recuperating the memory of a woman unjustly forgotten, Alice Wexler's has been the revising of a myth.

In the first of her two-volume biography, Wexler succeeded admirably. *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life,* published in 1984, traced Goldman's childhood in czarist Russia, her rise to the status of radical celebrity in fin-de-siècle America, and her subsequent persecution and satanization as "Red Emma," bogeywoman of the Right and the FBI. Born in 1869 in Lithuania to a family of conservative Jewish shopkeepers, Goldman emigrated to Rochester, New York, in 1885. Like Vorse, and at almost the same time, the young woman moved heaven and earth to get herself out of the provinces and to New York City; arriving there, penniless, in 1889, she nonetheless felt, as she recounted later, that it was then her life began. She quickly became an intimate within the city's militant anarchist circles and a charismatic speaker at rallies and protests for workers and the unemployed. For the next three decades, she made Lower Manhattan her base for a career of ceaseless political agitation. It was there that she published her newspaper *Mother Earth,* organized publicity campaigns on behalf of jailed radicals, served one of her two prison sentences, and illumined the bohemian scene.

In her first volume, Wexler ably placed Goldman's politics in the context of the eclectic and fruitful activity of left-wing coalitions in early-twentieth-century America. But the author's real achievement was to turn a feminist perspective on Goldman's difficult, exasperating character and her often depressing private life. While Wexler remained respectful toward Goldman's heroic self-presentation, she also probed all the ways in which Goldman remained hostage to her gender—her psyche

tangled with mediocre men, narcissistic sexual dependencies, and an insatiable craving for admiration.

It is all the more sad and puzzling, then, to see Wexler fail her subject in this sequel, which covers Goldman's twenty years of exile and her passionate, lonely campaign of protest against Soviet dictatorship. The book begins in 1919 with the FBI's deportation of Goldman and 248 other socialists, anarchists, and labor radicals to the new workers' state of Soviet Russia. Along with her old comrade and beloved friend Alexander Berkman, another deportee, Goldman sailed through the fierce North Atlantic seas with mixed feelings: grief at leaving home mingled with the thrilling prospect of joining the revolution. Arriving in the dead of winter 1920, she and Berkman set to work in an official capacity to collect materials all over the country for the Petrograd Museum of the Revolution.

Disaffection with the revolution set in slowly. With the massacre of sailors and revolutionary militants at Kronstadt in 1921, it crashed in upon them. Soon after, the couple left in a general deportation/exodus of embittered anarchists and fellow travelers. For the next two decades, they would endure the hard time of exile: shuffling about Europe on a string of temporary visas, continually moving, and living off handouts from friends.

Despite their troubles, they carried on, always from the Left, a ferocious agitation against Soviet tyranny. Repudiating the seductions of the anti-Communist Right, Goldman denounced the abrogation of civil liberties in Russia, the situation of political prisoners, the sufferings of the peasants, and the tyranny of the state. As her views grew increasingly unfashionable, she suffered the ignominy of fading public interest and the opprobrium of former comrades. In 1936, Berkman, seriously ill and depressed, committed suicide. Goldman devoted the last years of her life to solidarity work for the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, both in Catalonia and abroad. She died in 1940.

Wexler, so original and imaginative in her interpretations of Goldman's life in America, in this volume simply abdicates the field to left-wing orthodoxy about the nature of the Bolshevik regime. In doing so, she hopelessly embroils herself in the same judgments of her subject that devastated Goldman while she was alive. Goldman exaggerated and overreacted to political repression in Russia, Wexler argues. Out of the old sectarian animosity of anarchists toward Marxian socialists, she unfairly blamed the Bolsheviks for the deteriorating economic situation. By publishing her views in the mainstream American press, she contributed to right-wing reaction. And it was her own paranoia about the Communists that lost her the respect and attention of the Left. Wexler accords Goldman some grudging admiration for her work for the Spanish Loyalists, but even here she faults her for her lack of solidarity with the Communist front, the same Communists who executed (or "persecuted," in Wexler's euphemistic parlance) many of their anarchist and socialist allies.

Wexler scolds Goldman's anti-communism, psychoanalyzes it, and condemns it, but she never asks herself the one question that might make sense: Why not take Goldman's views seriously?

Wexler develops her extremely critical interpretation of Goldman through implication and assumption rather than through forthright articulation of her own views. Throughout, she maintains a tone of balance and moderation. But it is just this tone that becomes so maddening. The language of even-handedness serves to mask, as in all conservative rhetoric (left- or right-wing versions) the most inhumane evasions. Take this example: her dismissal of Goldman's and Berkman's *Letters from Russian Prisons,* an exposé of the situation of political prisoners published in 1925. The volume, Wexler writes, was biased and nearly useless because the editors didn't compare the Soviet Union's treatment of political prisoners with the situation in other countries (including the "denial of civil rights to Black Americans"), because "the suffering recounted consisted more often of isolation and loneliness than physical brutality" (solitary confinement), and because most of the informants were bourgeois intellectuals.

Let's look closely at this reasoned critique, formulated so judiciously. Revolutionary Russia, the supposed beacon of a new era of hope and liberation for the world's people, arrested writers and thinkers because they dared to criticize—even because they *might* criticize—the Soviet state. The detainees were put in solitary confinement for months and even years. And American radicals should have kept quiet because of race riots and what happened to Joe Hill?

This is the kind of realpolitik and spurious internationalism that Wexler pities Goldman for lacking. It is an authorial stance at heart, not very different from the attitude epitomized in a comment that Robert Minor of the CP supposedly made to Berkman in the twenties: "You people make me sick ... what do these thirteen [jailed anarchists] matter, or thirteen hundred even, in view of the greatest revolution the world has ever seen?" Similarly, then, Wexler scolds Goldman's anti-communism, psychoanalyzes it, and condemns it, but she never asks herself the one question that might make sense in confronting the last political battle of a woman even Wexler acknowledges to have been a great radical: Why not take Goldman's views seriously? This lapse is all the more ironic just now, as the Soviet people themselves are calling for revisions of the history of the 1920s and 1930s, and as the people of Eastern Europe are rising to vindicate so many of Goldman's criticisms and a few of her hopes.

There are other failures of sympathy. Wexler seems to forget the extent to which Goldman's personality was rooted in a radical milieu and, consequently, how utterly devastating she found the loss of the respect and intellectual company of the many comrades who continued to toe the Soviet line. Likewise, she seems uninterested in how Goldman's most basic beliefs fired her detestation of the Soviets. There is little empathy for what it meant for Goldman to fight for her political life, little feeling for how her spirits dragged as lecture audiences diminished and the radical young turned away from the perennial *kvetch* and toward the more glamorous connection to a victorious revolution. And there is no sense, finally, that this is a life that could break your heart. □

Book Review

Won't Get Fooled Again

Jefferson Morley

Rock Around the Bloc by Timothy Ryback. Oxford University Press, 1990, 272 pp.

> *When the mode of the music changes*
> *the walls of the city shake*
> —Ed Sanders of The Fugs

I know it's only rock and roll. So why do politicos, East and West, care so much about it? In Czechoslovakia, President Vaclav Havel dubbed his country's peaceful transformation "the Velvet Revolution" in honor of the Velvet Underground, a New York rock band of the 1960s. In China, nervous Communist officials this spring cut short the concert tour of rock star Ci-Xuan. Closer to home, the Federal Bureau of Investigation sent a formal letter of complaint to the Los Angeles rap group, N.W.A., for their song, "Fuck the Police." And Tipper Gore, wife of Democratic presidential candidate Albert Gore, has established a Parents Music Resource Center to counteract the allegedly damaging effects of rap and heavy metal music on young American minds. Now legislators in sixteen states are considering proposals to require government classification ("stickering") of rock albums with "explicit" lyrics.

Why does rock seem so important right now?

Not because it provides a politically correct view of the world. Outspoken rap is sometimes rejected summarily as "sexist" or "racist." Nor is it political insight that attracts us. Like many fans, I maintain a mental chart of the Top Ten Worst Rock Songs Ever. I turn up the volume whenever one comes on the radio. "Eve of Destruction," Barry McGuire's braying descent into sixties idealism, is high on the list. "Political" tunes are as likely to inflict mental punishment as they are to inspire idealism.

Rock is not politically important because rock stars lead "causes" like Earth Day or Band Aid or the Concert for Ethiopia or No Nukes or the Concert for Bangladesh. In 1984, Bruce Springsteen had the biggest pop audience one could hope to command, and he did his damnedest to enlist all of us in good causes. He criticized Reaganism; raised a lot of money for unions, homeless shelters, and the like; and played his heart out. But it didn't amount to a drop in the zeitgeist bucket.

As Springsteen's experience shows, well-intentioned rock musicians are most likely to *lose* influence—not exercise it—when they venture outside the musical sphere. Rock-supported causes can be worthy and may even produce good songs, like the 1986 anti-apartheid rap-rock hit, "Sun City." But this spring, when more than 72,000 people at a London stadium saw Nelson Mandela's first public appearance outside of South Africa, they had not really come for a political purpose. They were there to hear a remarkable program of rock and reggae. Mandela, despite his admirable presence, was not essential to the event. The musicians were.

Rock is politically important because a significant minority of young people on the planet, from Alabama to Zaire, love it. "Pop music is a crucial source of imagined identities," note two British critics, Simon Frith and Henry Horne, in a fine book called *Art into Pop.* "In 'our' songs and singers . . . we recognize, as if for the first time, our own desires."

The political relevance of rock and roll lies in these youthful desires and these "imagined identities." The desired identity of the young music fan may be as sexist, stupid, and narcissistic (and fun) as Motown or Madonna. The music may be as artless as that of Bob Dylan or Black rappers. But its influence and the imagined identities that arise from it remain with us, individually and collectively. That identity is a conception of ourselves—the articulate rapper who dares to speak up or the glamorous "material girl" in full control. It is a vision of who and what we are. Music thus situates us in the world, even though its lyrics may not be politically or socially "relevant."

The effect of rock and roll is especially visible and dramatic in closed societies where the state seeks to regulate private desires in the name of the public good. In Czechoslovakia, rock was an essential refuge for political dissidents like Havel as well as completely apolitical free spirits. Rock is likely to have a less dramatic effect on an affluent, open society where desires can be more freely expressed and more easily manipulated for commercial purposes. Still, as rock prophet George Clinton reminds us, "Ain't nothin' but a party, y'all."

Rock and roll is most political when it isn't political. Take the case of the Velvet Underground. Twenty-five years ago, the Velvet Underground was a bunch of fairly twisted, articulate young middle-class white people living in New York. They partied more than they protested the Vietnam War. Their hit was "Sweet Jane," not "Eve of Destruction." They didn't worry about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia or Robert McNamara's soul. And Lou Reed, the band's leader, probably never said to guitarist John Cale, "Hey, John, let's go start a revolution somewhere in Central Europe."

Yet now we have the Velvet Revolution. How to explain it? One good place to start is a superbly provocative new book called *Rock Around the Bloc* by Timothy Ryback. The book is an account of the bands and the sounds that were popular in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from the days of Elvis to the eve of the revolutions of 1989.

Ryback's rockers, it turns out, look a lot like their American counterparts. They play amplified guitar-driven music with a backbeat in styles derivative of African-American musical traditions.

Jefferson Morley is Washington editor of The Nation.

Bloc rockers wore odd clothes, railed about political hypocrisy, screwed persons of various sexes with unseemly frequency, said things like "Fuck the police," received letters from law enforcement agencies, drank and did drugs, offended people, and sold out to local cultural authorities—not necessarily in that order.

As a rule, bloc rockers were no more political than their Western counterparts. And struggle between rockers and authorities was also quite similar to that in the West. Confrontation, co-optation, and surrender were practiced by all sides.

Still, you can't read this book and maintain that rock music wasn't crucial in sparking the ongoing crisis of communism. As Ryback puts it, "Rock music has provided, in both a figurative and literal sense, the soundtrack of the Gorbachev revolution." Ryback begins the story in the late 1940s when the growing popularity of jazz, imported to the East by radio and U.S. servicemen, was disturbing Communist authorities. As in the West, white men in positions of power expressed fears that the music would lead to free thinking, drug use, sexual excess, and generalized negroid decadence. By the 1950s, rock had replaced jazz as the bogeyman. The ideologues began rationalizing jazz as proletarian art and denouncing rock and roll as a depravity of late capitalism. This official resistance was overwhelmed in the East, as in the West, by the enthusiasm and disposable income of young people.

Early in the rock era, at least some people in the Communist world understood why so-called socialist youth were so antisocial as to love Western rock and roll. "We have razed the image of god from the skies," said one Hungarian critic in 1962. "We abolished the idea of heaven, and consequently did away with ethical norms which saw the ultimate of life as salvation. And we did so rightly."

But this same critic also noted that Communist polemics and five-year plans were hardly an adequate substitute for centuries-old ethical codes. Young people needed more than official calls for socialist unity and increased productivity. "What have we built," the socialist intellectual wondered, "to replace the heaven we have destroyed?"

"For millions of youths," Ryback notes, "the answer arrived in the spring of 1964 in the form of four young beat musicians from Liverpool." Many Soviet bands began their careers imitating the Fab Four. After 1964, bloc rockers proliferated in numbers and diversified in style. They had always looked to the West for inspiration and hard-to-get albums, but they quickly developed their own traditions after watching the Beatles mine theirs. The cadences and tones of Eastern language and music were slowly incorporated into the Western rock idiom.

Rock and roll is most political when it isn't political.

The evolution of Mashina vremeni (Time Machine), a leading Soviet band, is a good example. Mashina vremeni started out as a Beatles clone but soon began playing their own songs with Russian lyrics that tested the tolerance of the authorities. Eventually the group was banned. Their leader, Andrei Makerevich, specialized in "simple songs with poignant, sometimes bitterly satiric lyrics," according to Ryback. The riffs may have been from Led Zeppelin, but the spirit was out of Russian literature.

Mashina vremeni nevertheless attracted a national underground following, including the embryo of a Soviet capitalist leisure class: ticket hustlers and black-market record companies. Makerevich, the unrewarded outcast, began to feel ripped off and the party's cultural authorities began to reconsider their intolerance. In 1979 Makerevich was unbanned and became "an official superstar," in Ryback's words, with a jet-set wife and "wildly enthusiastic audiences from Leningrad to Vladivostok."

The book's account of punk in Hungary, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia in the late 1970s and early 1980s is especially intriguing now that those countries are trying to exercise their independence. As in the West, punk rock erupted in the bloc as a rejection of practically everything. Rock stars of the sixties generation who had retreated into the joys of family life and political irrelevance were blasted by the three-chord barbarians. So were representatives of an increasingly bankrupt and pro-Russian political order.

One popular Estonian punk band, Propeller, attacked conventional bands and Soviet domination with equal gusto. In Latvia, punk rockers confronted horrified Russian tourists in the early 1980s with a banner reading "Latvian Punks Will Finish What the Germans Began," a reference to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union which killed twenty million people in the Soviet empire.

A sign of incipient fascism among the once stalwart socialist youth of the Baltic republics? Perhaps. But I suspect the Latvian punks were just gobbing on the imperial visage and all that it stood for, like Johnny Rotten screeching "God save the Queen / She ain't no human being."

Ryback's story is now essentially over: the bloc has been rocked and is no more. The walls of the Soviet empire shook one day and were gone the next. In the words of a song played by the Czech band Pulnoc (pronounced "pool-nawts," meaning "midnight") on their recent North American tour, "It couldn't happen / It happened / It did." Incidentally, that song was written before the Velvet Revolution began. It is called "She's Weird," and it's about

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a girl, not history.

Today, both rock and roll musicians and the cultural bureaucrats who once tried to control them are incorporating themselves into the political economy of Western pop. Party dogma no longer has to be followed, but a profit does have to be turned. State-run record companies and radio stations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are expanding their rosters and playlists. Licensing deals with multinational Western entertainment corporations are the order of the day.

Last year Boris Grebeshnikov, a leading Soviet rocker, released an album tailored for the Western album-oriented audience. It lit up neither the charts nor the eyes of critics. Kino (Casino), an art-rock band from Leningrad, released a funky, moody album that got better reviews. Pulnoc, from Prague, is likely to sign with a major Western label. So is Perfect, a Polish hard-rock band whose lead guitarist, Zbigy Holdys, served as a campaign manager for Solidarity during Poland's first free elections in forty years.

Some will gloomily conclude that Eastern rockers have merely won the freedom to play on MTV, sell T-shirts, and endorse beer. Their rock and roll idealism, it will be argued, will be dissipated and drowned in the rising tide of capitalism. Superficiality will be rewarded and originality ignored.

As if that weren't the case under socialism. Rock and rollers "sold out" to Communist officials with the same frequency, gusto, or reluctance as rockers in the West "sold out" to corporate executives. Ryback's book is full of stories of rock stars striking bargains with cultural authorities—some honest, some not so honest. These arrangements, involving money, performance space, and airplay, gave rock musicians access to an audience and vice versa. Bloc rockers will have to make similar arrangements in the West if they want to reach a wider audience. In this sense, post-Communist rockers will inevitably—and should—sell out.

After all, the rock business is a competitive arena involving money, desirable goods, constant innovation, deceit, manipulation, and self-reliance. Rock has always been part of the creative destruction of capitalist enterprise. The old is torn down so the new can be purchased.

The business of the rock artist is to create and discover an audience with words and music. He or she may be motivated solely by capitalist values; by musical values; by artistic, intellectual, or political ambitions; or by some combination of them all. But to pursue their audience, rock artists, in general, tend toward simplicity. They distill the essence of emotions, experiences, and ideas, and express them musically in something less than seven minutes.

Commercial motives and artistic limpidity have a way of becoming enlightened and complex, as no less a rock critic than the president of Czechoslovakia has explained. When the Czech rock community was being persecuted in 1976, Havel wrote an essay called "The Trial" in which he suggested that rock musicians and rock music are

> the unintentional personification of those forces in man that constantly compel him to search for himself, to determine his own place in the world freely and in his own way, not to make deals with his heart and not to cheat his conscience, to call things by their true names.

That's a pretty good definition of the electrified blues music of the R&B artists who invented rock in Black bars and nightclubs in the 1940s. It also captures the spirit of some of the best of classic rock, including Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and Jimi Hendrix. It even describes the punk irreverence that rescued rock (just barely) from safe triviality in the late 1970s. And in 1990, in North America, Havel's words probably apply best to rappers like N.W.A., Salt 'n' Pepa, 2-Live Crew, and, yes, even Public Enemy.

In the same liner notes, Havel emphasized that what is especially important about the soul-searching impulse of rock and rollers is that in their (our) music, there is an "awareness that at any time one may come up against the resistance of the 'masters' and the incomprehension of deadened minds—or against one's own limits."

Exploring the limits of one's capabilities? Challenging those with "deadened minds"? Testing the "masters" of the political/cultural order? What Havel saw in a handful of obscure rock and roll bands in Prague in the mid-1970s, fifteen years later swept through millions of people under forty-five who live between the Elbe and the Urals.

Rock's contribution was critical, but, as Havel notes, "unintentional." Yet that very lack of intention makes rock all the more important. In an era when ideology (programs of political intention) is losing credibility, the world of rock and roll is an alternative world where other identities—personal, sexual, political—are possible.

The political awareness, to be sure, was also fostered by democratic ideology, human rights groups, organized religion, and radio and TV images of the affluent West. But the experience of actually taking on and living in a new identity generated by rock music was the one thing—the only thing—that the populations between the Elbe and Urals had in common. Lennon succeeded Lenin.

No wonder the Florida legislature and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party are worried. They can never be entirely sure that what happened in the Soviet bloc will not happen on their block, and on yours too. It's only rock and roll, and they might not like it, but there isn't much they can do about it. □

BOOK REVIEW

Found in Translation

Nehemia Polen

The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition, Volume 1, Tractate Bava Metzia, Part 1. Commentary by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. Random House, 1989, 252 pp.

The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition, A Reference Guide by Adin Steinsaltz. Random House, 1989, 323 pp.

There is a witticism that distinguishes between a Jewish best-seller and a secular best-seller. A best-seller in the secular world is a book that sells a million copies the first year after publication, ten thousand copies the second year, a hundred copies the third year, and no copies for all succeeding years. A Jewish best-seller sells one thousand copies the first century, one thousand copies the second century, and one thousand copies for each succeeding century. With the appearance of the English version of the Steinsaltz Talmud, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has accomplished the seemingly impossible: a best-seller in both senses of the term. The first volume, released several months ago, is being purchased in large numbers even by American standards, yet there is every indication that it is destined to be an enduring work, a work that intellectually curious Jews and non-Jews will wish to own and cherish and pass down to their children. It will never be remaindered.

Over a hundred years ago, Rabbi Israel Lipkin (Salanter), founder of the Musar movement, proposed the idea of translating the Talmud into Hebrew as well as German and other European languages in order to make it accessible to the secular intelligentsia of his day. Like many of his ideas, this one did not reach fruition in his lifetime. Salanter would no doubt be pleased that his project has now begun to be realized by Rabbi Steinsaltz and his team of translators.

It is no secret that the Talmud is not an easy book. Indeed, the adjective "talmudic" has become synonymous with circuitous, labyrinthine reasoning. The Talmud itself seems to concur. A passage in *Sanhedrin* (24a) commenting on Lamentations 3:6, "HE HATH MADE ME TO DWELL IN DARK PLACES . . . ," states, "This verse refers to the Babylonian Talmud." Yet the Talmud is the central document of rabbinic Judaism, and it is impossible to understand any aspect of Jewish religion or culture without it. Anyone who does not have at least some familiarity with the vast talmudic literature is doomed to Jewish cultural illiteracy.

A chapter of Talmud is not like an early classical sonata; it is much more like a sprawling romantic symphony, with often dizzying changes in tone, direction, rhythm, and mood.

And that is exactly where Rabbi Steinsaltz comes in. He has made the popularization of the Talmud his lifework. His justly famed Hebrew edition provides a fully punctuated and vocalized text, a translation of the Aramaic into modern Hebrew, a running commentary on each word and phrase of the original, as well as a wide range of helpful historical, geographical, linguistic, and other background information. All this and more is now being made available to the English-reading public with the appearance of the first volume of the English translation, published by Random House. Elegantly produced and bound, with gilt-edged paper, this edition announces that the Talmud has arrived on the American cultural scene; nothing dusty or archaic here. Of course the text itself is as difficult as ever, but the translation and commentary are there to take us by the hand and guide us, step by step, through the maze of talmudic argument.

Its wide acceptance notwithstanding, the Steinsaltz Talmud has not lacked for detractors. Some academic scholars have dismissed it as unscientific, as not taking into account modern critical research in the development and editing of the talmudic text. Some elements within the Orthodox community, on the other hand, have criticized Rabbi Steinsaltz for alleged impieties, for not sufficiently emphasizing the divine character and Sinaitic origin of the talmudic corpus. (According to Jewish tradition, the written *and* the oral Torah were revealed to Moses at Sinai.) Both groups of critics, it seems to me, misunderstand the goal of the Steinsaltz edition.

To better articulate this goal, allow me to indulge in a bit of personal reminiscence. One of my earliest memories is that of my father, of blessed memory, *lernen mit der oylem* (learning with the people in shul). Just before or just after services, the people who had come for the minyan would gather around long tables, sit down on wooden folding chairs, and open up the old, yellowing pages of the Talmud. My father would read the Aramaic text and translate into Yiddish; typically a lively discussion ensued. While a few of those who joined in the learning seemed to be knowledgeable and scholarly, most were not. Some—perhaps they were old *kommunisten*—were very skeptical about the Talmud and its teachings, but they seemed to enjoy the *lernen* at least as much as the others. People joined the group not because they were professional scholars, and not even because they believed that they were studying a sacred text, but simply because they knew that this is what Jews

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do, this is how Jews converse, this is how Jews challenge their minds, this is how Jews exchange ideas. The Talmud was, for them, the universal currency of the Jewish intellect.

It is this sense of common culture and shared language which we have lost, and which Rabbi Steinsaltz hopes to restore. Neither a work of academic scholarship nor of religious piety (though both piety and scholarship are abundantly in evidence, hovering in the background), the Steinsaltz Talmud is meant for amateurs and dilettantes—in the original senses of these words. For, as Jacques Barzun has reminded us in another context, an amateur is a lover, and a dilettante is a seeker of delight; the treasures of our cultural legacy, Barzun has argued, are too important to be reserved for the scholars and pedants, to those who study them professionally, but must always remain accessible to those who love them, to those who seek delight in them. This is precisely Rabbi Steinsaltz's goal, no more and no less. He has been called a "guru" of the Talmud, but I think the word "enthusiast" is both more flattering and more accurate: he wants all Jews, indeed the entire world, to be as excited and enthusiastic about the Talmud as he is. His interests as well as his goals are universal, not parochial. He has mastered the language and rhythms of talmudic discourse, although he first came to them later in life, and he beckons to us, saying, in effect, "Come join me; you can do what I have done. The Talmud will not narrow your thinking, it will broaden it. It will open vistas, not close them."

So the Steinsaltz Talmud must be evaluated under the rubric that it has set for itself, as a work of popular pedagogy. The first hurdle for a student entering the world of Talmud is of course the Aramaic language and the elliptical, telegraphic style of talmudic discourse. Here Rabbi Steinsaltz succeeds brilliantly: he displays a native grasp of the language, and effectively conveys its rhythms, nuances, and tonal inflections, its shouts and its silences.

The idea of presenting two levels of English translation—one literal, one expository (with the literal text embedded within it)—works beautifully, and will be extraordinarily helpful for students wishing to track the contours of the original text. The translations are transparently clear and crisp, with nothing of the awkward and ponderous "Yinglish" style sometimes seen in efforts of this kind. A careful comparison of the English with the Hebrew shows that the English translation and commentary are much expanded, indeed at times entirely different. Random House should consider giving more prominent credit to the team of English-language translators, whose work displays great originality, perceptiveness, and intelligence, not to mention much diligence and determination, but whose names appear but once, in small print, on the overleaf to the title page.

But the bottom line of all this is, can you really learn Talmud on your own, without a teacher, from this edition? This is not a trivial question. One thinks of the example of the Soncino Talmud: anyone who has tried to master a *sugya* (talmudic discussion) from the Soncino edition knows that it is virtually impossible. So it is good to be able to report that, yes, it is indeed possible to learn the *shakleh vetaryah,* the quintessential give-and-take of talmudic debate, from the English edition of the Steinsaltz Talmud. Possible—not easy! (Learning Talmud will never be easy.) The English commentary is especially good at explaining the relationship between parts of an argument. It is helpful in pointing out transitions and changes in direction, in just the places that the Soncino edition was silent. It fleshes out the interstices, the connective tissue. It helps you hold onto the thread.

Still, this edition is not without its problems. To explain, we must say something about the subject matter of the first volume, *Bava Metzia,* Chapter One, which begins with the classic case of two people grasping a *tallis* (a shawl), each one claiming to have found it.

Central to the chapter is the notion of *kinyan.* Now the introduction to the tractate in fact gives us a two-paragraph explanation of this term. The word is first defined to mean "acquisition," "ownership." The text then continues, "*Kinyan* is the essential *right of ownership* which a person has over an object which is his. In fact the definition of a valid transaction in civil law is the transfer of ownership (*kinyan*).... *Kinyan* itself is an essential connection between a person and a certain object...."

All this is quite accurate and helpful, but it fails to emphasize the most pertinent sense of this key term for our chapter: *kinyan* as a stylized, demonstrative action to *effectuate* ownership of an object. *Kinyan* is a patterned, structured, performative activity which can cause ownership to transfer, or rights and obligations to accrue, to an individual. An example of *kinyan* in this formal sense is the grasping of the handkerchief to empower the *ketuba* at a wedding ceremony. For the purposes of our chapter it is important to know that lifting up an object is just such a *kinyan,* but the chapter introduction does not tell us this fact. The commentary does tell us, but only on page 84! Actually the *Reference Guide,* a highly valuable companion volume, provides an excellent definition of the word *kinyan* on page 254, but the student studying the Talmud text would have no way of knowing to look for it.

After spending some time with this translation and commentary on *Bava Metzia,* Chapter One, I came away with a renewed appreciation of Rashi (1040–1105), the classical Bible and Talmud commentator par excellence. The Steinsaltz edition does provide Rashi's commentary, in the original and in full, on every page, but it does not always incorporate Rashi's comments into the English commentary—the only commentary that most American readers are likely to be able to read. Let me hasten to state that I do not expect Rabbi Steinsaltz to follow Rashi slavishly and blindly merely because of Rashi's venerable antiquity. Far from it; I believe that Rashi himself, the most gentle and self-effacing of sages, would have loved nothing more than to know that someone else had superseded him with a commentary that spoke more clearly to another age and time. It is simply that, in some crucial respects, Rashi's pedagogic instincts are still unsurpassed, and when his lead is not followed, the student is in danger of losing out on an essential level of understanding.

To be specific: Rashi on the first Mishna (section) of the chapter introduces the notion of *ha-motzi me-havero alay ha-ra'ya*; loosely speaking, this means that possession is nine-tenths of the law. Once again, we have here a key concept which frames the discussion of the entire chapter, but which the Steinsaltz edition does not mention in its commentary on the Mishna or in

the chapter introduction. Of course, it is discussed later, and is highlighted in the conclusion of Chapter One at the end of the book, but one has to agree with Rashi in his implied judgment that the student needs to know this information at the very beginning, in order to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the chapter as a whole.

Rashi, in his unobtrusive manner, alerts the student by his comments on the Mishna to the essential concern of the chapter: that by *holding* the garment, each of the two claimants has a legitimate right to claim ownership, because each one is demonstrating ownership; indeed, each is engaging in an action which may legitimately be viewed as a *kinyan*—an effective procedure for acquiring ownership. And it is for this reason, as Rashi tells us, that their claims are taken seriously.

Furthermore, at several places in his commentary to the Mishna, Rashi informs us that certain issues or questions will be discussed later in the Gemara. These comments are omitted by the Steinsaltz commentary. Now it can be argued that nothing much is lost here: after all, the student will get to the Gemara soon enough, it is hoped, and will discover the Gemara's discussion for himself or herself. But why then did Rashi feel it was important to make his comments in the Mishna?

The usual way to understand these remarks, which occur quite frequently throughout his commentaries to the entire Talmud, is that Rashi is anticipating that the student might be puzzled by a question, and is telling the student to keep going, not to get bogged down, because the question will be dealt with later in the Gemara. But I believe that there is a deeper pedagogic insight at work here: Rashi is actually alerting the student to a problem that he or she may not have seen, so that when the student does encounter it in the Gemara, the issue will not be an unfamiliar one. In other words, Rashi is gently shaping the contours of the student's understanding of the Mishna in conformity with the Gemara's—which will make the task of understanding the Gemara that much easier.

Of course, academic scholars such as Jacob Neusner argue forcefully that the Mishna must be understood as an autonomous, independent, self-explanatory document, without reference to other works such as the Tosefta and the Gemara. But whatever the value of such a reading of the Mishna, it is certainly not the enterprise at hand here. The student is learning Talmud, which is the Mishna together with the Gemara, indeed the Mishna in light of the Gemara, and Rashi's lead is one that can still be profitably followed.

So while the Steinsaltz edition does an excellent job of helping the student follow the thread of the talmudic argument, the "lay of the land" on a local scale, it is less helpful at enabling the student to see the plan of larger units of text, or the topographical features of the chapter as a whole. Part of the problem is simply the physical size of the chapter. In the classic Vilna (Romm) edition of the Talmud, Chapter One of *Bava Metzia* takes forty-two pages to print (twenty-one folios); in the Hebrew edition of the Steinsaltz Talmud it takes eighty-six pages; in the English edition, the chapter extends to 247 pages. This bulk is necessary, but it has the consequence of obscuring still further the large-scale features of the talmudic terrain.

It must also be pointed out that a helpful feature of the Soncino English Talmud is absent here: in the Soncino edition, amoraic citations (from the Gemara) of tannaitic (earlier) material are placed in capital letters. Since a major feature of talmudic discussion is the jousting with texts from the Mishna, it is very helpful to alert the student to tannaitic material by a simple typographical device. Furthermore, the numbered paragraphs of the Steinsaltz Hebrew edition are eliminated in the English edition. There is a good reason for this, because numbers are here used to key the words of the text to the corresponding sections of the translation and commentary, an excellent device but one which again removes a typographical aid to perceiving larger structural elements. One suggestion might be to provide a chart or diagram mapping out the structure of larger units of text, so that the student would be able to visually map his or her progress along the path of the *sugya*.

A chapter of Talmud is not like an early classical sonata, with a clearly discernible A-B-A form; it is much more like a sprawling romantic symphony, with often dizzying changes in tone, direction, rhythm, and mood, an unfolding of themes and motifs which begs to be grasped not only in its

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individual parts but as a unified whole. A master conductor knows not only how to read each measure and phrase, but how to elicit the larger structures, the meaning of the entire work, indeed to foreshadow the sense of the work as a whole within the opening measures. There is no doubt that Rabbi Steinsaltz is such a master conductor, but there is more he might do to sensitize his readers to the broad perspective he surely possesses.

To continue the musical analogy for a moment, Gustav Mahler once said, "The symphony must be like the whole world. It must contain everything." Rabbi Steinsaltz would probably say the same for the Talmud. Indeed, this seems to be part of the Talmud's attraction for him: its elusive structure and wide-ranging mode of discourse. But the commentary sticks so closely to the text that we get very little sense of Rabbi Steinsaltz's personal perspective. His dazzling erudition, his playful yet profound style, his impishly penetrating aperçus—all of the personal qualities which make a conversation with him a genuine intellectual delight—are, for the most part, absent from the commentary, which always stays close to the surface of the text. Of course, the first duty of a commentary is to explain, but one would have liked to sense more of Steinsaltz in the Steinsaltz edition.

None of these quibbles, however, is meant to detract from the essential value of Rabbi Steinsaltz's achievement. He has indeed accomplished what he set out to do. He has made the Talmud accessible to us. He has put it on the top of our intellectual agenda. He has ensured that the Talmud will once again become a central vehicle of Jewish communication and self-understanding and has thereby made an inestimable contribution to fostering the elusive goal of Jewish unity. He has reintroduced the Talmud and its values to the world of general culture.

What we are to do with the tools that he has given us is, of course, up to us. As always among Jews, various factions will come along, pulling and tugging at the Talmud, claiming it as their own, claiming that . . . but wait a moment, doesn't the Talmud itself discuss just such a case, with two people arguing about an object which each claims belongs to him alone? *Bava Metzia,* Chapter One. □

MUSIC REVIEW

Irresistible Music

Norman Weinstein

Partisans of Vilna: The Songs of World War II Jewish Resistance by Henry Sapoznik, Adrienne Cooper, Michael Alpert et al. Flying Fish Compact Disc FF 70450.

Perhaps someday an enterprising record store owner will create a place among the shelves for music belonging to a category labeled "Resistance." I'm imagining a classification wide enough to include Pete Seeger and Shostakovich, Paul Robeson and this soundtrack recording connected to a documentary film about the Jewish underground in Vilna, Lithuania. Such speculation brought to mind the fleeting hype about "protest music" which filled the media in the early sixties. But "resistance" seems a more hearty, less whiny word to identify with music that defies horror, implying acts that follow cries of protest.

This music of resistance stirs defiance in listeners; it does not simply note injustice. The Black spirituals celebrated by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* channeled listener rage through coded instructions. Think of the lyrics to "Follow the Drinking Gourd." Such songs made the underground railroad happen, breaking the chains of American slavery through lilting melody and wisely covert travel directions. If the song was moving, it literally moved thousands of slaves north of the Mason-Dixon line.

The songs of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust can be viewed in a like fashion. Many of the twelve selections in this outstanding collection are calls to action. "You Jewish Partisan," for example, features a traditional Eastern European folk melody (as do most of the minor-mode tunes here)—but Shmerke Kaczerginski's lyrics are any-

Norman Weinstein is a poet and critic. He recently won an ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award for excellence in writing about contemporary music.

thing but customary:

I carry a new rifle.
On the missions, my friend
Kisses me, throat and shoulder,
From this day I've become
Fast with the rifle.

Lest this sound like braggadocio, the last stanza adds power to this assertion by claiming, "No, we will never be 'Last of the Mohicans.'"

Utilizing an image that seems alchemical at first glance, Abraham Sutzkever's "The Lead Plates of Romm's Printing House" describes how Romm's printing plates were melted down into lead for bullets. "Hush, Hush" orders the listener to be silent in the face of new graves dug by the enemy. And in the album's tour de force, "By One, Two, Threes," listeners are instructed to do a victory march rather than a march of resignation.

You might expect musical expressions of such defiant militancy in the face of unspeakable horror to be relentlessly shrill, uniformly somber. I'm delighted to say that this is an album of many musical surprises.

The twelve selections pass in a little more than half an hour. Two are poems recited by Irena Klepfisz with a precise feel for the musicality inherent in Yiddish lyric poetry. Instrumental accompaniments are restrained but gently appropriate, with one exception. "Dugout" narrates the story of a resistance fighter talking to his accordion. Damned if I can begin to guess why Michael Alpert's singing is accompanied by ... a balalaika!

This would make an appropriate gift to anyone who ever bought the stereotype of Jews docilely letting the Nazis lead them to slaughter.

But most surprises here are rewarding. Be prepared for a shock when you hear the voice of the youngster David J. Waletsky. Thin, nasal, and of questionable pitch in spots, he is nevertheless absolutely winning in his rendition of "Yisrolik," a saga of an orphan turned street peddler. His presence, absolutely unexpected, beguiles with artless sincerity, much like the untrained child singer on the recording of Archie Shepp's "Attica Blues." He's outstanding because he's robust, reckless, rambunctious, like the adults on this recording, yet with a tinge of overwhelming tragedy lacing his vocals.

Of the others, let me pay particular homage to the singing of Henry Sapoznik. An edgy urgency inflames his delivery, a grit and spunk which give his songs an unstoppable momentum. All performers are to be credited, even though Adrienne Cooper's operatic delivery was not always to my liking.

The programming successfully blends up-tempo martial anthems with moody and introspective ballads. Every song wears well on repeated listenings. One need not worry that this album is only of documentary value, or needs the video of the accompanying film in order to work.

Partisans of Vilna would make a highly appropriate gift to anyone who ever bought the stereotype of Jews docilely letting the Nazis lead them to slaughter. Historical texts to dissolve the stereotype can be suggested, but how much more dramatically efficacious is this rousing music in setting the historical record straight!

This song is written with blood
and not with pencil lead,
It's no song of a free-flying bird,
A people among collapsing walls
Sang this song with pistols in their
hands.

—Hirsh Glik, "Never Say"

These are musical performances that speak to all souls in all ages and say "No" to evil. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

sensitivity to the pain of others, and if its leaders were chosen solely by the extent to which they embodied these values, there would be a massive return to Judaism. Such a transformation would strengthen the Jewish community—and far from losing money, the money would come pouring in without all the clever fund-raising techniques and gimmicks.

It is in these terms that we call the organized Jewish community conformist. The dominant values of material success and taking care of "number one" have been internalized in the American Jewish world to the extent that worrying about the poor and the oppressed is frequently dismissed as "not a Jewish issue." Those who raise these concerns are told that they are "always worrying about everybody else's problems except for the Jews' problems." Yet the struggle for social justice is a primary command of Torah—it is a Jewish problem, *the Jewish problem par excellence*. To the extent that this has been forgotten, the organized Jewish community is correctly described as conformist—to the selfishness and celebration of material success that have dominated American culture in the era of Reagan and now of Bush.

An important word of caution here. It is not selfish to worry about oneself or one's own survival. We are strong supporters of Zionism. And we reject the kind of leftism that makes people feel guilty if they accumulate money or want to lead a good life, complete with good food, attractive clothes, good music, a nice house, a good car, and so on. There is nothing evil or fundamentally materialistic in those who seek material comforts for themselves. What becomes materialistic is when they make choices to support a system that will provide those benefits only to themselves and not allow for sharing the good life with others. In that sense, there is a moral difference between those who live well but support a liberal agenda that includes economic redistribution and adequate health, safety, housing, and food for those in need, and those who struggle only for their own well-being and turn their backs and close their ears to the cries of the oppressed and the hungry and the homeless. The choice of being on the Right is not a choice like preferring strawberry ice cream to vanilla—it is a choice with deep moral implications, and in our estimation it is frequently an immoral choice.

We at *Tikkun* have continually criticized the failings of liberals and progressives, their insensitivity to psychological, spiritual, and ethical concerns, and their insensitivity to many of the prob-

lems facing the Jewish people. But we still identify with the progressive social change movements because they articulate a fundamentally Jewish concern with social justice. That the organized Jewish community frequently picks people on the Right to be its leaders, and then defends itself by saying it doesn't wish to be "partisan," is just another way of restating the problem: this community has lost its way. Jews walk away not because they've seen and rejected Judaism, but because there seems little point in learning Hebrew and getting involved in a set of practices that seems to separate them from everyone else if, at bottom, the whole system seems to replicate rather than challenge the spiritual emptiness that is the hallmark of contemporary American life.

The tragedy is that many of those who are turned off by this world think they are being turned off by Judaism—because this is the only Judaism they have ever known. Ironically, it is because they have Jewish souls and Jewish hearts that they abandon an organized Jewish community that has often become a cheerleader for the worst aspects of American and Israeli society and has deeply forgotten our Prophetic legacy. Precisely because we wish to foster a return to Judaism, we will continue to critique the current distortions in the organized Jewish community.

Morals and the Novel

To the Editor:

As a publisher of novels with a moral conscience, I found two serious problems with Arthur I. Blaustein's article, "Novels with a Moral Conscience" (*Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1990).

First, Mr. Blaustein makes a large, unexplained, and, I feel, erroneous jump. In his text he talks about novels as something we read to "learn about who we are as individuals and as a nation" and something that forces us "to confront our society's inability to distinguish between authentic moral behavior and abstract moralizing." Then suddenly we are dealing with "the real-world conflicts of ordinary people who must struggle with freedom and justice, equality and opportunity," etc.; and Mr. Blaustein's list of twenty-four "socially conscious" books are for the most part about minorities, people involved in foreign political struggles, and people who are "ordinary" primarily in the sense that none of them would ever think of reading *Tikkun.* In other words, people who are not "us" and are not participating in the sort of moral behavior relevant to our lives.

There is no doubt that literature is an important way of getting into other people's heads and learning how to understand other points of view, and Mr. Blaustein's list includes many excellent examples of this sort of literature. But this is only a part of what literature does to help one think and act ethically. By putting so much emphasis on the Other, as do many people on both the Left and the Right, Mr. Blaustein forgets that this literature, too, can lead to a certain "moral vacuity," in that its readers can seek escape through empathizing with Others rather than acting in their own communities and for their own causes. His list reflects a jingoism of the Left, in which women, African-Americans, Native Americans, rebellious foreigners, and even "ordinary" Americans are dehumanized by being considered worthwhile simply for who or what they are, with all the concomitant compassion and concern of the paternalist and colonialist.

In short, any literature and nonfiction that is instructed by an ethical vision, is self-critical as well as critical (i.e., has a sense of humor), and has a sense of integrity, is helpful for the development of one's moral conscience. Mr. Blaustein's "socially conscious" books are an important subset, but taken exclusively they can be almost as bad as all that he seems to abhor, especially since those which flunk the last two of my tests can be just as manipulative as television.

Which brings me to my second point: Mr. Blaustein's first-person nonsuggestion to stop watching television. Besides the fact that television is the choice of the "ordinary people" Mr. Blaustein lionizes, one cannot ignore the fact that a prime-time show reaches more adults than all "socially conscious" books put together. And many of them are, if compromises, still instructed by an ethical vision and, therefore, of definite value in learning who we are and can be. In fact some things on television are excellent, including PBS shows, cable shows, films, and even a few of the series and specials. And even if Mr. Blaustein can gain "a healthy perspective on real life" without the escape of a ball game or comedy, I don't think he should non-suggest pulling the plug to us ordinary folks, who sometimes need something a little less heavy after a long day's work.

No one wants people to read more good, ethically motivated literature than I do, but it is certainly not an antidote to commercially motivated video any more than pulling the plug is, and it shouldn't be sold as such.

Robert Wechsler
Catbird Press
Highland Park, New Jersey

Arthur Blaustein replies:

I'll respond to Mr. Wechsler's second problem first. Does he really believe that we learn more about ourselves/"us" from viewing "Roseanne," "Cheers," and "Golden Girls" than reading E. L. Doctorow, Ella Leffland, and John Nichols? Does he really believe that many prime-time shows are instructed by an ethical vision? My experience has been quite different. I have found that the singular goal of the commercial TV mythmakers is to reduce us to passivity by exhausting us with hyped-up action. They then "relieve" us by appealing to our infantile fantasies and reassure us that, if we buy their candidate/product/position, everything will be fine. Institutional advertisers, network programmers, and media consultants are expert at catering to our lowest common denominator: our basest needs, insecurities, prejudices, and anxieties. Our dependency on mindless, endless, irrelevant consumption in turn creates the illusion that we are being satisfied. What is lost in the process is our freedom to make genuine choices based on real-life circumstances. As John Nichols succinctly put it: "Thirty-six flavors doth not a democracy make."

It is precisely because of these confusions and the awesome power of the mass media that American literature has such a critical role to play. It is the job of good novels to make distinctions, to break the insane mind-holds of phony myths and false symbols, to remind us of human values, to make us feel alive. Literature helps us to imagine, to discriminate, to question, to make informed judgments, to mature, to develop healthy values, and to remember history.

Mr. Wechsler's first problem is a deliberate distortion of reality and a

misleading interpretation of what I wrote. Three books (all prize-winners) by minority writers out of twenty-four listed and he starts getting nervous about "us" and "them." This kind of insularity is appalling. What does he publish? It just so happens that each and every one of the books I recommended speaks directly to "us" and is quite relevant to *our* moral behavior, not to some fantasized and projected "other." Moreover, Mr. Wechsler seems to have missed my central point—that we, as a nation, have allowed ourselves to be cut off from our own moral history. The novelist and critic John Gardner, in his book *On Moral Fiction,* said of the particular role of novels in America:

> In a democratic society, where every individual opinion counts ... art's (literature's) incomparable ability to instruct, to make alternatives intellectually and emotionally clear, to spotlight falsehood, insincerity, foolishness—art's (literature's) incomparable ability, that is, to make us understand—ought to be a force bringing people together, breaking down barriers of prejudice and ignorance, and holding up ideals worth pursuing.

Finally, I believe that the readers of *Tikkun* will find that the books I have recommended will speak directly to their real-life issues and conflicts; and do so with integrity, self-criticism, humor, and most certainly in an enlivening manner.

On Woody

An Open Letter to Woody Allen:

Regarding your dissent from the "limiting perspective" of *Tikkun* as a *Jewish* Critique of Politics and Culture ("Random Reflections of a Second-Rate Mind," *Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1990) it is hard to imagine what a critique would be like that had no perspective. In saying this, I assume "perspective" by definition involves limits, and that your "Random Reflections" could not have been written and certainly would not have been interesting without a perspective, a point of view differing from others, that is to say limited.

But then you said "limiting" perspective, didn't you? Half like keeping a lid on, or failing to reach out to others? Mr. Allen, if that is what you meant then I must say as an African-American, I don't agree. Except for *Commentary,* no other national opinion magazine has an explicit "limiting" reference as part of its editorial purpose. And yet none is more inclusive, more active in reaching out to others in the content of its articles and editorials than *Tikkun.* Failure to find other magazines with space consistently devoted to more inclusive worldviews was surely part of the basis for starting *Tikkun.* Absence of "Jewish" in the title or statement of purpose is no guarantee or even indication of an inclusive nonlimiting worldview.

In all sincerity, I know a brother or a sister when I see one, and they are quite different from the males and females that are frequent writers for many of the magazines that are limitless in the way you seem to approve. How are they different? I agree with you, they're probably not different biologically, despite what your Uncle Max says, but they are different in terms of the dimensions of their sense of community. Large chunks of humanity fall outside those dimensions, some for ideological reasons that seem to place them beyond the pale for human interaction, others because of presumed character defects that eliminate any hope of their ever achieving a place among the "deserving." Still others are simply ignored.

I must admit, our capacity to make "others" out of people seems unbounded and often serves as only transparent cover for more lethal propensities. As you said, if there were no religious categories, we would invent replacements to further our bloody plans. That is probably the risk that goes with being human. Two humans are sufficient to provide the initial elements for a community. A community that does not include the rest of the universe of humans necessarily creates "others" of those left outside. Thus an element of potential tragedy is built in right at the start. Whether tragedy in fact occurs when communities meet and compete seems to depend on the interplay of inclusiveness and exclusiveness within the communities and not on the existence of a particular point of view.

Logically one might say why not just go straight to the most inclusive view of community and eliminate all these predictable struggles in between? That is essentially your answer to *Tikkun,*



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Mr. Allen: Why waste time and lives with all that interim stuff when you know freedom lies where the most inclusive ideas are? The answer, unsatisfactory as it may be, is that it doesn't work very well unless much of the rest of the world is also ready to move in that direction. In order to bring that about, it seems that each presently separated group must move through successively more inclusive stages of community until such time that inclusiveness is the dominant attitude of a large group of those communities with respect to the rest of the world. Only then would the conditions be right for a world community. Meanwhile one need not have the most inclusive position in the universe to make progress and to demonstrate the value of human life; but one does need to be vigilant in recognizing the need to move in that direction whenever possible. This vigilance will help set the emotional and attitudinal conditions for constructive negotiations, compromise, and ultimately world-class solutions.

Simon Walker
Oakland, California

SOVIET PROSPECTS, JEWISH FEARS

(Continued from p. 18)

they need to survive in the Soviet Union.

For example, when our film festival was threatened by anti-Semitic local bureaucrats from the Moscow mayor's office, many non-Jews came to our support and helped turn the tide. Many of these people would agree with Nina Katerli, a Leningrad writer whose father was Jewish although she identifies herself as a Russian. For the past year and a half, a leader of an anti-Semitic group has been suing her in the Leningrad courts over an article she wrote which equated his "anti-Zionist" writings with anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. When I asked her if the local Jewish community was supporting her, she said it was, then added:

> But it seems to me and to most of my friends that this struggle against anti-Semitism is not the business of Jews. It is the business of the Russians because this is a shame of the Russian nation.... When I struggle with the anti-Semite, I struggle not as the daughter of a Jewish father, but as the daughter of a Russian mother.

The Soviet press still refuses to confront anti-Semitism, and that reticence is likely to continue until the government makes such education a priority. As of this writing, Mikhail Gorbachev has made only one weak public statement against "the spread of nationalism, chauvinism, anti-Semitism, or any other isms," a statement that could just as easily be taken as a veiled critique of Baltic nationalism as a rebuke of the anti-Semites. In any case, it's a far cry from Lenin's historic address to the Russian people—"Shame on those who foment hatred toward the Jews."

But the hopes for Jewish renewal cannot and do not lie with Gorbachev alone or even with heroic individuals such as Katerli and Aleksandr Askoldov, the non-Jewish director of the long-banned but now universally honored film *Commissar.* Jews must enter into coalitions with non-Jews. Fortunately, there are signs that Jews indeed can and are forging links with a growing democratic coalition in the USSR, and that Jewish participation is being welcomed.

In Latvia, for instance, where politics are dominated by the independence movement, the Jewish community is flourishing with its own schools and publications, including the Soviet Union's major Jewish magazine (published with some American support on state- or Party-controlled printing presses and edited by a young non-Jewish Russian who supports Latvian indepenence!). The Jewish community has close ties with the Popular Front for the Independence of Latvia. The head of the Latvian Jewish community, Grigory Krupnikov, was recently elected (with Popular Front support) to the city council in the Latvian capital of Riga.

In Moscow, when the Va'ad held its founding convention last December, members of the anti-Semitic group Pamyat planned to picket the conference hall. Knowing the Ukrainian reputation for anti-Semitism, Pamyat asked the Ukrainian nationalist movement Rukh to join the picket line. Apparently Pamyat didn't know that Rukh had passed strong resolutions against anti-Semitism and that Rukh's leaders planned to stand by their word. When they heard from Pamyat, they called the Va'ad and offered to provide security at the Va'ad convention. When about sixty Pamyat supporters demonstrated at the opening day, the convention was guarded by militant Ukrainian nationalists!

"That sounds absolutely crazy," said Grigory Krupnikov. "But OK, that was the fact. All of us saw that. A group of Ukrainians came from the Ukraine to guard the Jews in Moscow."

In the March local and regional elections, Jewish activists in Leningrad helped get out Jewish voters for the democratic coalition. The coalition won a major victory, taking a majority of the city council and of Leningrad's seats in the Russian parliament. Anti-Semitic and Russian nationalist candidates were defeated time and again. Clearly, they were rejected by the large majority of Russian voters and not just Jews. The results were similar in other large cities where the local governments are now controlled by democratic activists, many of whom were in jail or internal exile not so long ago.

The grass-roots electoral coalitions that triumphed

in March have real influence now in the Russian Republic as well as in the nationality republics where they are rooted in national consciousness. In Russia, the political awakening toward democracy is much more complex. New coalitions of grass-roots political groups and intellectuals are emerging rapidly as the Communist Party disintegrates. A number of leading Communist reformers have reportedly given up their Party cards, and the Party is expected to split in several directions as new political formations take shape. The Jewish revival movement is, despite its isolation, part of this trend.

The focus of Soviet Jewish activists on emigration means that at least for the foreseeable future, identification with the Jewish community will have little appeal for Soviet Jews who want to stay to participate in the new movements to change their country. As with the sixties generation in the U.S., Jewish identity may be a basic touchstone or an unrecognized influence on progressive work for democracy and human rights, but that submerged identity will not be converted to a positive force when all they can see of organized Jewish life in the USSR is a massive flight from the fight that engages them. These young activists are drifting farther away from the Jewish community.

As a result, not only is the Jewish movement losing its people to emigration, it is losing its power to attract new activists among those who want to stay. Radical refusenik Yuri Semenovsky told me before he left for the United States that his young friends among human rights activists were "founding new groups to fight for their own ideas. It's impossible now to communicate with them."

This impatience of younger Soviets has become a powerful force in the USSR. The young are eagerly testing the limits of glasnost, creating new groups to speed the democratic process. They may not be in positions of power, but their radical rejection of the past is a barrier being raised against the reactionaries who yearn for a simpler time of centralized control, bureaucratic repressions, and state-sponsored anti-Semitism.

In a wonderful 1947 essay in *Partisan Review* called "Toward European Unity," George Orwell foresaw today's changes:

> In a society of that type the regime, with its complete hold over education, news, etc. deliberately aims at preventing the pendulum swing between generations which seems to occur naturally in liberal societies. But for all we know the tendency of one generation to reject the ideas of the last is an abiding human characteristic.... In that case there may by 1960 be millions of young Russians who are bored by dictatorship and loyalty parades, eager for more freedom, and friendly in their attitude toward the West.

Orwell's hope about 1960 was perhaps more justified than his pessimistic forebodings associated, in his writing, with a later date. By 1960, a young generation was being inspired by the Khrushchev thaw and de-Stalinization to challenge the old ideas. Much has been written about the Gorbachev generation and its self-conscious undercover deathwatch over the Brezhnev regime. Gorbachev's economic advisor Leonid Abalkin, head of a think tank in Siberia during the Brezhnev era, would toast his fellows at the institute with the words, "We'll outlive them."

By the time Gorbachev and company finally took power in the mid-1980s, another still more restless generation was rising. They are people now in their thirties, born after World War II and the death of Stalin (as refusenik Boris Kelman notes, "in Purim time") in 1953. They were the first generation to live without starvation, the first generation that had easy access to books, radios, and the schools. As Elena Zelinskaya put it, "We were the first generation that was not crushed."

Demographic changes impel this powerful generational shift. Moshe Lewin in his brilliant essay *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* (1988) details the rapid increase in education levels and the urbanization of a formerly rural society during the Brezhnev period. Such changes created a base for Gorbachev's reforms, a base that did not exist when Khrushchev tried his hand at reshaping Stalin's legacy, and a base that is now the major pressure on Gorbachev to move faster or move aside. As Democratic Platform coordinator Igor Chubais says,

> I would like to say we are not a country where one man decides anymore. Now, we decide—people decide. If there were one million people in the streets of Moscow on February 24th, it doesn't make any difference to them if Gorbachev was happy about this or if he was in a deep depression. It wasn't his decision. If the miners strike, it's not Gorbachev who decides that, and if the party splits, it's not Gorbachev who decides.

On the day that he made those comments, Chubais's Democratic Platform was condemned by the Politburo. Two weeks later, an unrepentant Chubais was expelled from the party, and two weeks later still Gorbachev was booed on May Day in Red Square. "Everybody in our country lost all fear," said Grigory Pelman, an activist. "People are quite different, quite new, quite active, and very aggressive."

The people may have no fear, and Gorbachev may be unable to impose his will, but the current wave of protest has left a vacuum of power, traditionally an insecure situation for Jews. Democratic activists don't know what will fill that vacuum, or how the stalemate will be resolved, but they have unequivocally rejected

what one former dissident called "the Soviet mentality that there exists only one point of view."

Leningrad Jewish leader Boris Kelman put this critique of Soviet political psychology another way, emphasizing that the society had no regard for "the integrity of the human individual," which he views as the critical social value.

Democratic activists, Jewish and non-Jewish, constantly return to questions of values and morality. When I asked political scientist Leonid Volkov, recently elected to the Russian parliament, if the effort to split the Communist Party and create a multiparty system was now so far advanced that it was merely a matter of timing and tactics, he was emphatic in his disagreement:

> This is a mistake because now we have a crisis of principle in the country. The general problem of the population, of popular consciousness, is the lack of principles, of value systems. So we cannot take those political decisions only from pragmatic points of view.... In making major political decisions, we must take into consideration the principle side, the value side of them.... We prefer a spiritual merger of the people who really want to behave as Social Democrats, not just to change the labels of Communists to Social Democrats.

The challenge is to alter the way people think in the process of creating new political and social institutions. This emphasis on basic values seems extraordinary in a country on the verge of disintegration, but it shows the influence of the dissident movement and their Jewish counterparts, the refuseniks, who created a tradition of resistance. People who strongly dislike Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's monarchical and nationalist views still agree that he is a hero for exposing the gulag in the face of repression.

Most American Jewish activists have a harder time with these distinctions, lumping all Russian nationalists together as one massive and rapidly growing movement already united around only one thing: hatred for the Jews. But Russian nationalism is a much more diffuse sentiment and a much less united movement than is portrayed in the Western press. Even the most extreme group, Pamyat, is actually made up of six different factions, ranging from monarchists to cultural nationalists to Fascists.

Moreover, many activists in the democratic movement support Russian cultural expression and national feeling even as they oppose anti-Semitism as anathema to their vision of a democratic Russia. In fact, "Democratic Russia" is the name of the progressive political coalition that crushed the Right in the recent elections in Moscow and won a majority in the city council. A friend of mine in Leningrad joyously raised the flag of Old Russia over one of the city's highest buildings the night the democratic coalition won the majority in that city.

One of the originators of the Leningrad democratic movement is Mikhail Talalay. He had himself baptized in the Russian Orthodox church just a few years ago, and he spends his time trying to convince Leningrad city authorities to restore churches and change street names back to the names they had before the revolution. I asked him about the name of the city itself. "We would like to go back to St. Petersburg," he says. Yet, Talalay is a Russian nationalist who opposes chauvinism and welcomes Western influence:

> Our movement is not looking to the West, but it thinks that Western culture has a positive influence on Russian culture, and we must work together to open the door and windows ... to help our renaissance. Pamyat thinks that Western influence is dangerous for Russian culture.... We are sometimes mixed up with patriotic movements like Pamyat with which we have nothing in common. For us, culture consists of many ingredients, and we believe that Russian culture, especially the culture of St. Petersburg, was influenced also by West European cultures, by Jewish culture, by German, Italian, or Polish cultures.

While the Jewish activist Kelman emphasizes the more Western libertarian value of the individual as the organizing principle for his outlook, the Russian Orthodox activist Talalay has this different ideal. The crucial point is that these two values and two movements for cultural renewal are not necessarily incompatible.

As for the right wing of Russian nationalism, it is not the threat it is made out to be in the American Jewish and mainstream press. Pamyat is not a new Nazi party on the verge of power. This is a lurid mystification. That Pamyat exists at all is frightening, but it is also a marginal group and few people believe it has any mass potential.

Many Jews who are preparing to emigrate are terrified of Pamyat, but it's hard to find other Soviet democratic activists who take the group seriously as a political threat or even as a physical threat to individual Jews. Gleb Pavlovsky, a former dissident and human rights activist who has been active in publicizing the reality of pogroms in Armenia and Azerbaijan, minimized the threat of Pamyat with some hyperbole of his own: "I must say that with all the dislike I have toward this organization, it's the only national movement in the USSR which hasn't killed anyone. Those who kill very seldom speak about it."

Latvian independence activist Vladlen Dozortsev, an ethnic Russian whose son edits the Soviet Union's

major Jewish magazine, dismisses the right-wing Russian nationalists as "the old demagogy." Their members are mostly drawn from elderly war veterans, middle-level bureaucrats who are losing their jobs and power, and people with little education. All these constituencies are in decline in the USSR.

Many Soviet Jewish activists point to a different threat, Gorbachev's appointment in March of two right-wing nationalists to his largely ceremonial Presidential Council. One of them, Valentin Rasputin, is a famous environmentalist and writer, and an infamous anti-Semite who repeats the old canards that Jews are to blame for the Russian Revolution as well as the crucifixion. Aside from the fact that democratic activists argue about whether Rasputin still has all his marbles, even Russian nationalists who like what Rasputin says and writes don't take him seriously as a political leader capable even of defending himself.

Ernst Safonov, editor-in-chief of *Literaturnaya Rossiya,* one of the leading anti-Semitic Russian nationalist newspapers, told me, in defense of Rasputin, "They must be cruel and malicious people who take advantage of a writer who bares his heart and soul and his hot-bloodedness.... The most frightening people are those cold, calculating people."

The other nationalist appointed by Gorbachev is Veniamin Yarin, head of the United Front of Workers, a group that not only has few workers but is also widely suspected of being a government front group.

Almost all the activists and journalists I talked to interpret Gorbachev's appointment of Yarin and Rasputin to his Council as an effort to strengthen the Right so he could remain in the center as a Communist even as the mass of people moved toward more radical democrats.

The problem is that this kind of center is fast disappearing. Gorbachev's party is disintegrating, and he as President has to make many difficult economic choices. The right-wing nationalists' economic program offers Gorbachev no way out. Yarin's economic program can be reduced to a series of attacks on the "shadow economy," "black market business," "the new Soviet bourgeoisie," "the 150,000 officially proclaimed Soviet millionaires"—all phrases used by Sergei Bendyin, a member of the Moscow coordinating committee of Yarin's United Front of Workers.

While the American Jewish and mainstream press have consistently exaggerated the threat from the Russian nationalists, they have even more consistently ignored the potential of the grass-roots democratic movement, a movement which must be the major hope for Soviet Jews who do not leave. Do these movements have a chance to acquire power and successfully rebuild the country?

In the March elections, these "informal" democratic movements, as they were called, actually did win control of local governments from the Communist Party in the major cities. Gleb Pavlovsky, a founder of the informal movement of political clubs, says that in these major cities the epoch of the informal movement is now over. "Those who were yesterday called informal are forming town and city governing bodies. I have no illusions about their competence, but we also have no alternative." Being in power changes everything. "Now," says Elena Zelinskaya, "we must think about constructive suggestions, how to build a new society, how to save the city."

Already, the new city administrations are in a guerrilla war against the local Communist Party apparatus and the government apparatus in Moscow. In the past, the Party-state owned everything de facto in the name of the working class. Now the new city governments are fighting the Party and Moscow over who controls the means of production in the local area. When the television ministry in Moscow refused to permit a controversial deputy to be interviewed on Leningrad television, city council members accompanied the deputy to the station the next day, where he held forth for several hours, accusing Party leaders of corruption. The battle is being waged on every front.

The city administrations are also setting themselves up as independent economic zones. They are sending representatives to the United States and other countries to find investors and, most important, they are starting to make deals with one another to trade goods and services. This horizontal exchange is the beginning of a market guided and controlled not by corporations, as in the West, but by elected local governments that have enough broad popular support to rally people for hard times ahead and to assist people to survive the hardships. Similar appeals from Gorbachev and his prime minister Nickolai Ryzhkov were received with derision, despair, and a run on local markets.

If the Ryzhkov government resigns because it is unable to win popular support for economic changes, Gorbachev may be forced to do what the democratic movement in the national Supreme Soviet has been demanding all along: sit down with them for roundtable talks toward the creation of a coalition government including and perhaps led by noncommunists.

The major battle lines now are not among the variety of political parties vying for leadership as the Communist Party loses its monopoly. The battle is between an emerging democratic movement and the apparatus of the party-state. The leaders of the Social Democrats, even as they organize their party's entrance on the scene, are already emphasizing the need for a broader coalition not based on a socialist program. Vladimir Kardielsky, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Association, is working with Supreme Soviet

opposition leader Yuri Afanasyev and others to create a Committee of Civic Action to bring together "all existing democratic organizations and movements" into what could become the prototype of the new noncommunist coalition government. Leonid Volkov, a Moscow Communist who is leaving the Party and supports the Social Democrats, was even more emphatic: "the predominant mood is to create democracy. Democracy, democracy *uber alles*."

It is not clear if it will be possible to create a more tolerant and democratic Russian society in which long-oppressed minorities can survive and thrive, but I met many Soviet activists who believe that the Russians are not biological anti-Semites; that they, like the Baltic peoples and the nations of Eastern Europe, are ready for a change after years of repression.

What are the odds? When I asked Anatoly Belyayev, the embattled editor of *Twentieth Century and Peace,* if he was in trouble after his magazine's breakthrough publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, he answered in a thick Russian accent, "Is no trouble. Is a fight."

Like the Russian democrats, Soviet Jews have a fight on their hands for renewal and against anti-Semitism, but it can be successful only as part of broader democratic movement for a new society. Rather than dismissing such coalition efforts among Soviet Jewish and non-Jewish activists, we should be giving them our support and resources. They are engaged in one of the most remarkable struggles of our time. □

AIDS ACTIVISM

(Continued from p. 24)

able a person and too valuable a representative of gay people to shoot crap this way. He came out of the closet and got reelected; he pulled it off. He has an enormous and deserved reputation for being smart. Then he goes ahead and blows it, so to speak, because he couldn't keep it in his pants.

Pally: Could you go back to bringing people out of the closet, "outing" . . . ?

Kramer: I'm becoming more and more militant about it; its time has come. A younger generation of gays has no problem with their sexual orientation and have contempt for those who do, gay or straight. And the pendulum is swinging to where that younger generation is calling the shots.

We can't forget that the bottom line of closeting is a great loathing for homosexuality, the fear that it's something horrible and must be hidden. In any event, we're not talking about bringing out the average person but rather people in the public eye. The hope is that, as more people are public and proud of their homosexuality, being gay will become as acceptable, considered as normal and healthy, as heterosexuality. That will take a revolution and there's no revolution without discomfort.

Pally: Do you add Bush to your Reagan-Rosenthal-Koch list?

Kramer: Bush did one good thing for AIDS: when ACT UP was trying to get DDI (dideoxyinosine)—a new drug that works like AZT—on parallel track, he helped. Parallel track is where a drug is administered to patients through community groups and physicians while the government is still running final tests on it. It allows us to get more quickly drugs that may save lives. ACT UP had to get the NIAID and the FDA to okay the idea, and then persuade the manufacturer, Bristol-Myers, to provide the drug free of charge as a "compassionate use" medicine—otherwise, no go.

What the world doesn't know is that Bush and Bristol-Myers CEO Richard Gelb both went to Yale, and Bush called Gelb about DDI. Everything is the old boys network. I don't know if the call was between Gelb and Bush or between Gelb and Bush's personal physician, but I know calls were made.

If an AIDS patient is rich, he can get many drugs that will save his life. Unfortunately, most aren't, and the costs of AIDS treatments—of any health care—are mammoth. Doctors and pharmaceutical companies are so greedy. Burroughs Wellcome, the manufacturer of AZT, is charging exorbitant prices for a drug they didn't even bear the cost of developing. The National Cancer Institute developed AZT, the government sold the patent outright, and Burroughs Wellcome has been profiteering ever since.

AIDS is going to force a change in the health care system, and that means national health insurance. Hundreds of thousands of people will be sick; shall we let them die? When you read that the government spent $159 billion to bail out the Savings & Loan banks, you wonder where our priorities are. ACT UP has started researching national health plans, looking at Sweden's, Germany's, and the Kaiser Permanente plan in California. We want to come up with one that will work.

Pally: Do you think the AIDS epidemic has made gay people seem more sympathetic to the nongay public, more responsible for the way they've handled the epidemic?

Kramer: In part. There has been an increase of antigay violence, but I think there's been a lot less than I expected. Even though people say terrible things about us, when it comes right down to it everybody realizes

we're their sons and daughters. One out of every four families has been touched by AIDS. Gay people are frequently seen on TV; we're not so frightening perhaps as the word "homosexual" is when you actually see us and we look just like people you know. I don't want to overstate this because we're ten years into an epidemic and if sympathy had been there from the beginning we wouldn't be in this state.

Pally: In your work with ACT UP you've wasted no words about John Cardinal O'Connor and the Catholic response to AIDS. What about the Jewish response?

Kramer: Do you mean, would I tear up a Torah the way that Catholic man destroyed the host at St. Patrick's Cathedral [during an ACT UP protest] last December? If the Jewish religion was doing to me what Catholicism was doing to my Catholic gay friends, I can't say I'd be upset if someone went in and tore up a Torah. I can't say I'd do it, but I understand the rage.

Because of the way Judaism is structured, there's no one official response to AIDS as there is from the Vatican. And there certainly have been some very compassionate rabbis, like Rabbi Balfour Brickner in New York. Elie Wiesel has said some good things about AIDS. Mainstream Judaism isn't advocating that homosexuals be annihilated or that sex education not be taught or that people not use condoms, as the Catholic church does. I don't hear much that's progay from Jewish organizations, but I don't hear much that's antigay, either. So as long as things are relatively quiescent, the Jewish response to AIDS isn't first on my list of wrongs to right. All this, of course, is excepting the ultra-Orthodox.

You know, one day gay people will be allowed to marry legally, and I hope Judaism allows these rites in a religious framework if people want them. And if a gay couple adopts a baby boy, they should be able to have a *bris*; it's the same for all rituals. A lot of intelligent Jews realize that homophobia doesn't redound well to those who practice it.

Having said that, I must also say I feel abandoned by my religion. I have little desire to practice it again and I question gay religious organizations that are so determined to find acceptance by religions that don't want them. I understand the desire to fight for religions that they feel are as much theirs as anyone else's, but I wonder what they find in religions that are so annihilating. It's doubly true for lesbians, who suffer second-class status and rejection as women and again as gay people.

I no longer believe in God or organized religion. Organized religions have so much blood on their hands over the centuries, they're not for me.

Pally: Jews, if only because of a history of persecution, have less blood....

Kramer: You'd think that a people who had been the underdog for so long would have sympathy for others. It's not something Jews have done so well lately. Where are their ears, where are their memories?

Pally: You use "holocaust" to describe the AIDS epidemic; the word is also in the title of your latest book. Do you think there's a distinction between government neglect in the AIDS crisis and Hitler's intentional genocide?

Kramer: I always use a small "h," not the big "H," but we must remember that there have been many holocausts. Jews don't own the word.

I'm not talking about inadvertent neglect in the case of AIDS but intentionality as sure as if a Hitler were at the helm. With AIDS, there are a number of Hitlers at the helm. We'll never know if AIDS was introduced intentionally, but it has intentionally been allowed to get out of hand. I refer readers to my book, *Reports from the Holocaust: the Making of an AIDS Activist,* and to *Modernity and the Holocaust* by Zygmunt Bauman, a professor at Leeds University, published in the U.S. by Cornell University Press.

I'd like my last words on the subject to be these: the war against AIDS has been lost. By the time it's over, millions of people will have died needlessly. A disease has been allowed to develop into an epidemic, then into a pandemic, and finally a plague. If that is not a holocaust, what is?

Pally: Do you think there's been a significant change in the sexual patterns of gay men since AIDS?

Kramer: No question. Even the studies by the Centers for Disease Control bear this out, not that I believe very much in government studies. You hear about the one or two who are going nuts still, but that's always going to be the case and shouldn't be blown out of proportion.

Pally: What about straight men?

Kramer: As I understand it from my friends working with heterosexuals and AIDS, getting straight men to use condoms or practice safe sex is an enormous problem, especially among Blacks and Hispanics where the macho ethic is so important. They refuse to use condoms or admit that they have clandestine gay sex. I would think this might be one of the big issues in the women's movement.

Pally: Abortion is no doubt the next arena for women;

what's next for gay people?

Kramer: We have to improve our organization. We don't have enough representation in Congress or at the lobbying level. We don't have visible leaders, and we need a mailing list as large and powerful as the National Rifle Association's or Jesse Helms's.

In terms of AIDS, I have a one-track mind: research and drug testing. When we have drugs that work we'll stop dying. With 222 new cases a day, we don't have time for niceties. We need something that will make people live.

Pally: Many people feel compulsory AIDS testing would help control the epidemic: if we knew who was infected with the AIDS virus, they wouldn't unwittingly infect others. But you're against compulsory testing....

Kramer: It would be wonderful if we knew how many people were infected, but compulsory testing won't achieve that—education will. People must be convinced that it's to their advantage to come in and be tested now that there are treatments, like AZT, that can help them stay alive. Compulsory testing will terrify people away because there are no guarantees against discrimination if you test positive. We need anti-discrimination policies so people won't lose their jobs, health or life insurance, or their passports.

Pally: What do you think of Bush's visa and immigration policies that restrict people who test positive for AIDS antibodies and people who have the disease from travel in the U.S.?

Kramer: Let me put it this way: almost all the foreign delegations to the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in San Francisco this past June refused to participate because the entrance restrictions were too insulting. You can't have a conference on AIDS and not let people with AIDS have reasonable access to it. The irony is that the U.S. has most of the West's AIDS cases yet we're excluding people from this country while their governments aren't excluding us.

Pally: What about the protest Haitians organized against government refusal to accept, categorically, blood donations from them?

Kramer: I'm very proud that they got fifty thousand people out for their protest. The biggest ACT UP protest was five thousand. It's always dismaying that the gay community can't get itself together in terms of numbers.

In terms of the blood: I don't trust the blood supply, period. There's too much unknown about the AIDS virus and the possibility of cofactors that we can't even identify yet. Until we put someone in charge and research this disease thoroughly, we can't be complacent about anyone's blood donation.

Pally: Do you favor anonymous AIDS testing, and if so, who should take the test? There are clinics in New York and San Francisco, for instance, where you come in, give them a number, and you are identified only by that number. They never have a name or any other form of ID, for maximum confidentiality.

Kramer: I don't know how I feel about making dicta about taking the AIDS test. It seems to be reliable for the majority of cases, but there are also a lot of cases of false positives and false negatives. There's also some question about whether one virus is the cause of AIDS. Every researcher now feels that cofactors are involved. An awful lot of people are HIV positive who are not getting sick.

Pally: What percentage?

Kramer: There are 100,000 cases of AIDS, and supposedly two million people are infected with HIV. That's an awful wide spread, I don't care how long the incubation period is. I know a number of people, myself included, who've been positive for HIV infection since 1976 or 1977 and haven't gotten sick. Maybe a lot of people will carry this virus with them till they die a natural death at ninety.

Pally: How do you know you've been positive for HIV since 1976?

Kramer: A lot of gay men participated in the Hepatitis B study in the seventies that resulted in the production of the Hep B vaccine. The New York Blood Center froze the blood so you can now test it for HIV.

I've been having my T-cells monitored for about four years and I practice safe sex. But suddenly knowing I'm HIV positive is very, very scary. It's made life exceedingly precious; it's made me work ten times harder on my work, my activism and writing. It's made me fight harder than ever in Washington. It's also made for bad dreams and horrors in the middle of the night.

Pally: Let me ask one more question about politics: many people, gay as well as straight, object to the civil disobedience and other disruptive tactics that ACT UP employs....

Kramer: Many people also support us completely. Actually, it doesn't bother me what people think. One of

the lessons I learned as a writer is that some people will like what I say, others won't, so I might as well say what I want. ACT UP does civil disobedience, we lie down in the street and block bridges, but we also do a great deal behind the scenes, like the DDI-FDA-Bristol-Myers negotiations.

There has to be room for civil disobedience or even more extreme forms of activism. When you have an extreme group of activists it makes it easier for the center to negotiate. With us out there asking for the moon, the moderates can get a few stars, to be poetic.

I'll give you a case in point. There was severe criticism of ACT UP at the 1989 International AIDS conference in Montreal. We took over the opening session, we heckled endlessly, we made ourselves pains in the asses. My own doctor wouldn't talk to me she was so furious that we disrupted what was supposedly a scientific session. On the other hand, we were the big story. We made every paper and network news in the world. We were asked to join three major committees in Washington, we were asked for input on the 1990 AIDS conference and we negotiated with Bristol-Myers for DDI.

I said to my doctor, "You can yell at us and disapprove, but when you get DDI for your patients just remember it was because of us that you got it." She took me out to dinner last week. If you want to know the truth, I wish ACT UP were ten times more radical than it is. □

THE PATRIARCHS

(Continued from p. 14)

prodigious, exploitative, demonic energy of capitalism, its ability to dissolve the real, its calculating, quantifying power, which makes only what can be profitably counted, count. Marx's economic predictions may be wrong, and the states that pretended to think of themselves as founded on his principles (though there is little in his work that would describe how such a state should be organized or its economy managed) have been tyrannical and unproductive. But for all its flaws, his critique, describing the many formative affiliations between the way we earn our lives and the selves and the lives we make, still has bite, especially as it has been elaborated and refined, with great sociological and philosophical sophistication, by such twentieth-century Marxists as Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Guy Debord (whose gnomic, suggestive *Society of the Spectacle* has greatly helped me with the quandary of the 1980s). They have elucidated the exfoliations of the capitalist *attitude* in our consciousness, the way that economic life forms the shape of our instincts, our ideas of pleasure (not satisfying work but distracting go-faster toys that overwhelm consciousness).

Perhaps the critique, more than the dream of community, is what will be most lasting in Marx's work. But the fantasy of a community where there is a true and happy congruence—even an identity—between one's needs and the needs of one's society, where my comrades' development *enables* mine, this dream gives Marx's criticism of our world both a bitterness and acuity, as the Kingdom of Heaven does to Christianity's critique of this fallen world. Marx's heaven denies many of the solaces of our current civilization—after all, it is hard indeed to evoke love, and it may seem a comfort that one might now buy it (or something like it). Instead Marx imagines for us a more profound pleasure and a purer pain (to confront that place where the contradictions of one's life are felt most deeply as what inevitably constitutes one, that realm once called tragic):

> Assume *man* to be *man,* and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust.... If ... through a *living expression* of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a *loved person,* then your love is impotent and a misfortune.

Perhaps the Marxist idea of society as communion—the near-fusion of each with each into one internationale—is impossible on this earth, for it may ignore a need for individual differences as part of any ego's construction, even if those differences are themselves only fantasies. Can we, even in our most utopian dreams, imagine that we could bear fully to overcome the ego, and its competitive self-overvaluing, except in brief moments of ecstatic fusion? In the name of communion, the Communist state rooted out all competing sources of power, all difference—except that between party and mass, leader and led—until one felt that earthly communion meant tyranny. So it is difficult to remember that we still have an unfulfilled need for a joining, that it will be difficult for earthly life to continue *with* each ego so overvaluing its distinctions—what Freud calls "the narcissism of small differences"—each "I" insisting on its angry separation from the natural world and from others. Mustn't one have the sense that one is joined to a community that extends one's life, that the community (as well as one's own efforts) gives some shape to one's name, and so allows for continuity over generations? If our mark *on* the world (and how marked and marred it has become!) is made against that world, and by our own efforts only, the expression of our essential essence alone, then won't the world overcome it eventually and write over us? Perhaps there is instruction still in Marxism about how community might be combined with the forces of modernity, the onrush of technology.

Marxism also gave words for a fundamental and, I think, still valid apprehension from the sixties that

the Vietnam War was most troubling because its roots didn't seem to be delineated by the language of our everyday politics and morality. The patriarchs, each in his way, suggested forces in the collective or personal unconscious—imperialist exploitation, a neurotic death instinct, an unhinged, resentful will—that went beyond the unsatisfactory reasons our common discourse offered for the why of the war.

Marx, like Nietzsche and Freud, claims far too much for his explanatory system. Marxism claims that the levers of the creation of the self, all its appetites and its violence, lie in the form of life required by a certain form of economic production—"the relations of production." For capitalism those relations are classes, and the sorts of personality and consciousness appropriate to each class. Class can't account for all of one's significant decisions, for one's style as an artist or one's style as a lover, one's passion, one's jealousy. But does this mean, as that postmodern irony that I think was primarily formed by the destruction of Marxism would have it, that theory is always broken against the rocks of the actual? *And then?* Should one conclude, with a deconstructionist irony so skeptical about any positive statement that one shouldn't even call one's positions "conclusions," that no gain in our self-understanding is possible, that we can only register the inevitable defeat of understanding? A sense of the self as socially made—*without hope that one can participate meaningfully in that making*—leads to an increasingly conscious and cynical irony.

Class cannot say all, yet it remains a potent way to speak of that ... moment ... agglomeration ... force, that is both within and without the personality, that place where one feels oneself, at very deep levels indeed, as being made by the social order. But class itself, as a force that forms one's politics, one's ideas, one's life, is an open secret easily forgotten in America. Or remembered in farcical versions, like *The Official Preppy Handbook,* with its pretense that we are discussing not power or privilege but taste in beer—a "lifestyle." America, far more than any previous nation, fulfills its promise of mobility between classes, even if far less frequently than one might wish. So one often forgets class. Marx's class critique gained additional force in one's mind from how little place class had previously had in one's thinking.

Of course there were aspects of the New Left's attraction to Marxism that were stuffed with illusion, not just an ignorance of history but a cavalier euphoria toward it. Was our optimism entirely mad? *Must* economic self-government, community and workplace democracy, inevitably turn into the Red Army and the Leninist Party? Perhaps now, as the long deformation of life in Eastern Europe comes to an end, new social imaginings may become possible, ones that make use of shards of insight from Marx, and avoid the horrifying Leninist outrages.

Leninism, with its central and secret and absolute command structure, is a war machine, formed by the necessities of battle against absolutism. Those who control such war machines will of course always try to find new enemies—within if not without—to insure that their rule remains necessary. Perhaps now, with the collapse of the Leninist war machinery, and with a possible diminution of our own, we, too, can re-begin the task of imagining the institutions that will make for greater democracy—each of us having a real vote in the decisions that shape our work place or our environment, a substantial (though never total) say in the structure of a society that will also, inevitably, partly structure each of us.

There was on the part of most of the Left an examination of whether Marx's paradigm applied (no matter how transformed); a sense of the tyranny that had been wrought in his name (and why); there was, even in the sixties, a suspicion that there might be, without revelation, no eternal values. So the morality that wasn't quite firmly *there* in Marx's text is given the illusion of being *present* by the sacrifices one offered—of oneself, and of others, as if the blood proved the truth of what was offered blood. In order to give *his* sense of our needs coherence and necessity, Marx's work appeals to a "human nature" without scientific basis. In forming an understanding of Marx's errors, Marx was read, so to speak, by Freud and by Nietzsche.

Nietzsche gave the most forceful (as well as the most genuinely playful) rendering in modern times of the effects of the absence of God as a moral guide: that the more courageous we are in acknowledging the absence of God, the more we might also be frighteningly unruly in our projects, free to take whatever shape whim suggests. History, perhaps, would *not* decide; or guide; and it could justify nothing. Nietzsche's directive is that we should make our whims difficult, rare, beautiful; and "beautiful" should mean that which provokes oneself and others to further difficult creation—world, and whim, without end. Our essence, he said, is unknown because it doesn't exist. God and Nature are dead, and human nature is just a jejune stand-in for the guidance of the Law once given by the now absconded God.

Then our "nature" is nature no longer; it is of our making, and we are free to illuminate or transform it with hallucinogens, to seek out blissful anodynes or extremities of suffering. The self was made and can be endlessly re-made. In the sixties, both the American Left and the "counterculture"—realms not always divisible—included many attempts at self-transformation, of consciousness

raising and mind blowing, that (as if Nietzsche were their half-hidden forebear) sought no guidance as to their goals beyond what might "feel right" to the experimenter. But, as one might expect from America, even the apparent hedonism of the "counterculture" found its original impetus in morality. "Feels right" had meant that one enacted now the attitude toward the community, toward the self, that was to become universal if the action succeeded.

Black and white civil rights workers as they got off the bus to be greeted by Southern sheriffs, and Southern Blacks by the simple but enormous act of registering to vote, had first shown that one might discover one's power and one's beloved community in the very process of building it. The movement that took its impetus and its direction from those events tried to find areas of implacable opposition (even, sometimes, where none existed) in order to insure the feeling of wholeness and courage, of being on the right track, that can come from such opposition. The elaborating, and living, of such decided actions—community now, empowerment now, paradise now—was meant to insure that the future and its goals were of one's own making, not granted or guided by an external power, whether called the Party, or the therapist, or the state.

The demand for palpable self-transformation, for inner feeling as the test of authenticity in one's life, incited the ecstasy of the sexually liberated, even the perverse, the formation of the nonhierarchical community, the experimentation with the expanded or raised or blown consciousness. In such efforts, you don't know how much of the future you can engorge now, how far you can go, until you go too far—an attitude which is ill-suited to political action, if that is thought of not as tragic foolishness but as the taking of state power, of the instituting of new social arrangements.

These experiments led to a repugnance on the part of the vast majority of one's countrymen, and, for the participants themselves, often led to a terror at the possibilities revealed—if not a positive unhingement. But fear of disorder isn't sufficient to make God re-establish an ordered world—though it may lead to a querulous conservatism, an insistence that one *must* have such a world.

Knowing our whimsical instability, yet fearing it, has not only led to conservative polemics, it has also germinated a weak version of Nietzsche that has become a comfortable part of our postmodernism, a half-acceptance of our freedom. Nietzsche's terrifying discovery that there may be no genuine "self," only masks to wear, becomes our contemporary costume show. We can take any form, but we usually take the forms of the past—thus postmodern retro-style. History, no longer the commanding Marxist God of implacable necessities, has become instead a panoply of lifestyles to purchase, an inventory of deceptions for our ironic use. Nietzsche's admonition that the self is a mask that one must carve becomes the glad lies (for what is truth?) of marketing, of well-packaged commodities. Politics, leisure, even morality, are all to be seen "aesthetically," masochistically enjoyed as varieties of deception, forms of entertainment. Even our interest in the grand projects of self and social transformation may come to seem to us like another kind of purchase, ornaments to a "lifestyle." But what do our purchases ornament? Nothing? A socially created self without essence? All in all, one may prefer *not* to see oneself as wearing a mask that has *nothing* beneath it but the unguided will itself. One might prefer a version of the self as at least a tasteful stylist and consumer, and the mask as a well-chosen ornament.

The profundity of the aesthetic sense, Nietzsche thought, would be sufficient to lead the lonely creator back, finally, to art's greatest challenge, self-transformation—the will cutting into the self, carving the mask, each stroke a re-shaping, and so the demise as well, of one's previous personality. Instead, today one imagines one has a nubbin of a static, essential self, constantly re-ornamented with current fashions. Fashion is tragic self-transformation become the manifold opportunities of taste. We wish to grasp the possibilities of the present, to be (in Rimbaud's phrase) absolutely modern, but we have settled for grasping the possibility of purchasing the present, a present not communally or individually made by us, but consumed by each one, worn by each one alone (yet with an implied group of fashionable cohorts, in the pages of the magazine, or at some numinous imagined restaurant).

The designer's name on the patch indicates that we know life is replete with opportunities for self-expression, for stylization. But, anxious and to some degree impotent, worn out or narrowed by the work that we specialize in, we require others to perform that stylization for us and reassure us of its excellence. We are in the "vanguard," but it isn't anymore our own feeling or the party and its slogans that guarantees that status, it's the designer's name, and his advertisements, which, like the party propaganda endlessly reiterated, says "I am in advance of the position that others will occupy, part of the elect, not saved perhaps, but not, God forbid, in bad taste." (Both the party and couturiers have new lines.)

To be fashionable is at the heart of the postmodern ethos—where to be substantial is to be seen. When one is not seen (and at the best places), one doesn't exist. In an image-saturated society only those appearances that are made to appear on a screen count as real. (However, one must add that in a Christian society only those appearances which *don't* appear count as real,

only the charity done where no one can see counts as real charity. Thus the uneasiness of our desire.) Most of us won't be famous, won't be seen and so be real, even for fifteen minutes. Fame may be our society's most prized scarce good—necessarily scarce, because if *you* are being watched, *I'm* not. But, at least, we can each buy something from the bazaar, we can wear what those on TV wear. Alas, poor shirt, at once so glamorous and so tawdry, once we buy it, it is no longer on screen, and so no longer real, able to cover me—the emperor's story reversed—with visibility.

There is a tantalizingly diabolical embodiment of this in cable TV's "Home Shopping Club." The spectacles' wares are shown on TV by a pitchman, and a few lucky buyers (the more regular customers) are heard—but not shown, of course—as they phone in their orders. For a few magic moments, they chat with the salesmen about the joy of their recently acquired gold chains or porcelain figurines. So as they buy, they are *almost* on the air, as if they were sitting next to Oprah, just off screen, only their voices present, as if, maybe with their next purchase, they might move down the couch and their bodies too might appear....

This uncertainty about one's reality is, Freud would say, finally an uncertainty about gender, the linchpin, he thought, on which the stable personality is organized. The psychoanalyst Serge Leclaire has memorably phrased the hysteric's problem as his constant questioning of himself and the world, as if he were with every action asking, "Am I a man or a woman?" Fashion, with its extremity of stylization, offers a hyperbolic masculinity or femininity, whose overstatement also reveals a denial of one's gender. Fashion provides a drug for one's anxiety ("Just look! I am so much this sex!" Or, "Please admire this irony, I am really *not* this sex!"). Yet the costume makes one more anxious, for one only ambivalently wants whatever it asserts. And fashion keeps all trapped within the orbit of its questions and its answer, not going deeper into what *produces* gender. But why should we, if that deeper asking can only lead to a more painful, more poignant anxiety, a more resounding emptiness?

If one could bear that deeper anxiety, that recognition that one has no essence, that the personality is constructed, then the interrogation of values, of gender, of reality itself as merely a "convention" could, Nietzsche thought, become the ground not only of irony but of new creation. Nietzsche, like Freud, thought violence was inevitable. Our own age is violent and cruel but denies what its hands do (and secretly, resentfully, enjoys); it calls cruelty morality. Nietzsche valued most those societies—the Greeks of the tragic age, the Hebrews—who were rich and open in their cruelty, for that meant, too, he thought, that violence might be used for new and admirable creation. But what shape should those creations take? This alternative Nietzsche, the stronger brew, quite properly terrifies. If there is no god to guide one's creations but one's taste, then what if one has a taste for blood? What if the greatest ecstasy one can imagine is the ecstasy of violence? By 1974, as "the sixties" ended, each night's news could make one feel surrounded by murderers—the state, with its many instruments of violence (armies and agents, TAC Squads and SWAT teams), the wild boys and girls of the Left, and the drug-driven squeaky loons of the desert fringe. (And now—has our capacity for murder simply disappeared—or even abated?) One was drawn to a Nietzschean style (whether one knew his name or not) by its incitement to search out actions that were not to be justified by the audience, or even by the future they brought about, but by the ecstasy of self-transformation that they created now. But what if one experienced most strongly only the quasi-ecstasy of destruction? How can we tell a true god, a true ecstasy, from a false one?

Nietzsche replies that the noble collects his debts; enjoys the punishment he inflicts; has done. The resentful wants an audience, wants to make the others' pain endless, invents not combat but torture; for the cries of the tormented are the only recognition of his excellence, or even his existence, that the resentful will ever receive. (The "Final Solution" would surely have found new victims.) The noble, by contrast, has an ego so strong that he can lose it; and for him only a total loss will do, one where the old self is necessarily destroyed by the symbolic hammer blows that are part of the sculpting of a new self. So Nietzsche re-interprets tragedy as the inevitably mingled experience of self-loss and self-creation, where the old Adam goes under as a new self is created. Only such a full, such a tragic loss will momentarily make manifest that "god"—the procreative lust of the world, the Will to Power—which is worth one's own continued activity, which, in the moment of tragic going-under, both guides one's hand and is one's hand. In such moments of ecstatic, tragic loss of self there is no one present to care for an audience's applause.

Yet Nietzsche's distinction between the self-transforming noble and the buffoonish killer, his aesthetic injunction to use one's violence to live a tragic life of self-transformation, may be an insufficient substitute for the moral imperative to restrain one's violence. But our moral imperatives, too, have repeatedly shown their weakness this century, even as our technological ability to magnify that violence has increased. If morality has failed us, then we still must resolve the question of what is to be done with our inevitably violent will. (Or do we imagine that our capacity for murder has disappeared?)

For Nietzsche, like Freud, thought that the weight of

our unacknowledged sadistic desires would show itself in a deadening of our taste for life, and then explode in a misplaced love of the knife; the gun; the instruments of torture; the camps; the ovens.... Can Nietzsche's apprehension be purged of, protected from, the ecstasy of destruction? A misinterpretation, Nietzsche says, of what the body truly wants. What we truly want is the mental war; the self struggling to be self-transformed; the body self-transformed; what we settle for is the body cutting into other bodies. Nietzsche's fundamental questions remain our questions—where do the gods come from that can shape our sadism and gratify our thirst for satisfying action? What action, if not ecstatic tragic action, will provide that communion with the ongoing (ah, but meaningless?) procreative lust of the world? What will give that endless movement meaning? For we must, as he reminds us, have meaning.

Perhaps, Freud thought, the answers might come from a more thoroughgoing examination of our personal histories. The artistic question of what *I* find beautiful, or the question that fashion lies about (am *I* a man or a woman?), or the question of tragedy (what gives one a self?), followed through the labyrinth of one's own past, leads, Freud thought, to the presiding gods whose struggle forms our life's themes, the gods of eros and death. The instincts are the gods whose struggle *is* our deepest "self," whose words interrupt our chatter and make our speech into symptoms, into that invaluable broken stutter which is, if only we had ears to hear, the eruption of those whose shapes also haunt our dreams.

Through this searching examination of our own history, we might finally learn to name our necessities. Pleasure is sexual pleasure, and it is of the body. This did not mean the body as opposed to the mind, for the mind, too, is of the body—the mind's work is making symbolic expressions of the instincts' desire. Sublimation is not simply repression; and culture could, Freud thought, be made *somewhat* more satisfying without ceasing to be culture.

This led, for some of Freud's followers, to grander hopes than Freud would have allowed. The dream, for example, that guided by psychoanalysis a new consciousness might be created, one that did not dryly, on the couch or in the library, unriddle the sexual dimension of culture, but would experience that connection at each moment. Seen through Freud's spectacles, culture is symbols—a cigar is *never* just a cigar—which allow us to enact our union with others and with nature; yet we do not *feel* that union, that utopian internationale that would include the whole of creation. If one felt at that "bodily" level one's joining to the symbols one used, felt both hatred and love, then each symbol, as it was linked with (copulates with!) other symbols, might transform one. But to fulfill such hopes would require a re-birth, a self not afraid of the constant going-under of the symbolic life, where one would experience death (and use one's death instinct) not as the end of life, or as the inner-directed force of a morality that keeps one rigid, but in one's constant transformation. All this has, indeed, an improbable, countercultural (now "new age") sound.

In practice, a change in the psyche is also the cause of pain. Death, even as change, is feared by the ego, and our flight from death, as much as our longings for union, helps shape the symbols we have fixed ourselves upon, those outer monuments that are meant to make us immortal, that inner rigidity that uses the energy of the death instinct for a morality that restrains the self, saving it back from change. The self-transformation we longed for, and sometimes glancingly experienced in the sixties, will also be apprehended as the death of the old self, and so will always create an almost overwhelming anxiety. The sense that the body politic and one's own body are fragmenting leads to new repression (to hold the self together), new distortion of the possibilities and agents of change. But what if one *doesn't* feel that vivid connection to nature and to culture? Will the world come to seem, as our slang repeatedly reminds us, so much shit—a screen on which to project all in oneself to which one doesn't wish to acknowledge connection, all one wishes to conquer, to destroy?

The death instinct, Freud imagined, is violence—directed at the self or at the world—and we fear it. But we also, inevitably, long for it; repressed, Nietzsche and Freud agree, it will return in orgies of destruction. And the deepest erotic claims of the human body, not for consumer goods, but for care and for connection—claims dangerously ignored, I think, this last decade—will return as well; or frustrated, unsatisfied, they will, Caliban-like, be diverted by the energy of the death instinct to pronounce a curse. Freud's great work, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* ends in a wan (and so far unanswered) prayer to Eros, that perhaps—or so I imagine it—the sources of pleasure might be increased, that the energy of death might be bound up with new sources of pleasure, and so find satisfaction not in destroying the world, but in reshaping the world and the self. I think we require still a new dispensation, a new authority—and will it be a new structure? a leader? a community? a god?—that will shape our violence, give meaning to our self-sacrifice, that will hold us even as we are being, from moment to moment, re-born, and so ease our anxiety. Without it we are prey to all the false gods who promise immortality, and incite the bloody orgy, piling the corpses before them.

Freud may have instruction still to give, and warnings

still to offer, to a renewed political imagination. But, as with Nietzsche, we have constructed instead our own postmodern Freud to turn from that task (or to pretend it is already accomplished). Instead of curing life of its illness (its fear of ecstasy and its fear of death) psychoanalysis declares life itself the illness, one that requires continual analysis. Trained by Freud, we see that the obsessive strength of our attractions comes from our unassimilated, unacknowledged past. Before analysis, one foolishly thinks he is re-finding a lost love. After analysis (but is there an after analysis?) one should feel one's attractions only distantly—as if watching television. All things being equal, then, why choose anything in particular or hold to anything for long? Why not change the station? Fear—and one wouldn't want to gainsay a sensible fear!—and weak attachments to the point of indifference, are attitudes that form the ethos of our current condition. And though Freud's work may help us to account for our fear, it has not yet helped us to overcome it—except in the analysis interminable.

But I think we can uncover, through the theories of Freud and the other patriarchs, a deeper idea of what made our past—rather than settling for a fetishistic or ironic quoting of the past, as do neoconservative philosophers and some postmodern architects. If there are archetypes, or recurrent themes or motifs, a human nature to instruct one, it will be found, I think, not in Jungian images, or the vernacular decorations of Las Vegas buildings, but in the Freudian *questions*, the interrogations—like the hysteric's "am I a man or a woman?"—that the curve of one's life embodies. The way forward, I think, is to see how the spirit of the patriarchs' project of self-understanding can be taken up again as questions, as the best contemporary thought does, so we might re-capture our history not as burden but as making, and so re-make ourselves. This must, of course, happen at the most basic levels, those where we hardly suspect that a "making" has occurred, where nature, so to speak, seems most natural. Feminism, for example, that vital extension of modern thought, shows us that the infant is not yet gendered as we *understand* that. The baby biped is only a bundle of wants—an "it," says Freud, an active or passive will, says Nietzsche, a place in the process of production, says Marx—with a certain set of organs. There will always be a biological difference between male and female, but what that difference *means* is culturally made and could be made very differently. And it is in part the greatness of these authors' works that they can often be read, using their own terms, *against* their patriarchal prejudices, to help us re-imagine that making.

A new postmodern (or continuation of the modern) that had the bracing tang of the patriarchs' work, a postmodern that was not simply chastened or ironic, might, I think, come out of that enterprise. We can, a little while longer, try to continue to believe in the providence of the market (and betray by our gestures that we do not believe, so making our lives ironic). We can try to misremember the modern project, as if we had already answered the patriarchs' questions—turning Nietzsche into a purveyor of happy masochistic falsity, making Freud the doctor who turned life into a sickness. Or we can with sober senses enter into the spirit of their work and extend it, guided still by our American desire for a union that is of this earth, one that is never complete "fusion" but always momentary, always restless, dissatisfied, always possibly "more perfect," a union that is always only almost one. In that way I think we might gain some instruction on how to continue the momentarily interrupted project to embody and reshape our violence and our love, our new possibilities for destruction and for community. □

THE MALL

(Continued from p. 34)

the 1930s, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim's sardonic "America" in *West Side Story,* Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind"—none of these efforts have dealt with Jewish complaints outright. Instead, they operate on the unstated premise that the open, democratic, and just society is the one which also, by extension, best protects Jews. (The fact that a Jewish attorney defended the right of American Nazis to march alongside the Holocaust survivors in Skokie is among the purest manifestations of that sentiment.)

In putting the Holocaust Museum on the Mall, we ask for a guarantee of safety based less on general principles than on a past history of special victimization. As Jews, we do not gain by seeking a more explicit guarantee for safety based on our fate as victims. Using the story of the Holocaust in this way represents a step back from the Jewish faith in abstraction, in the power of the law and the word. Sympathy is no substitute for political order. At the same time, we set a precedent of particularism which threatens to undermine the fragile foundations of civil religion. Blacks and Native Americans will want their own place on the Mall and—once the Holocaust Memorial is open—could not logically be denied. Will other ethnic groups be far behind? What will become of the sense that a common Americanness unites—and protects—disparate groups?

Americans All was the name of a book that my schoolteacher grandmother had me read; it was about heroes from various ethnic groups. The sense of shared values the title implies is not a substitute for religion or ethnicity, but it does offer an umbrella under which

ethnic subcultures and religions can flourish. Setting a different kind of precedent based on a particular group's need for a place in the sun threatens to inspire intergroup jealousies and a generally heightened awareness of group differences—the kind of situation that has never been good for Jews.

Obviously there is tension between Jewish values and mainstream American values. And there has been and continues to be anti-Semitism in America; the American political system did not do all it could have to mitigate the Nazis' attempted genocide. But none of this is sufficient reason to seek a separate Jewish museum on the Mall (and it will be viewed as such). As Jacob Neusner has written: "Jews need not regard the assimilation of Jewry into western civilization as disheartening or threatening. They ought, rather, to see it as invigorating and challenging." The history of Jews in America shows that this has been the case.

Nevertheless, consciousness of the political statement that the Holocaust Memorial on the Mall will make is only beginning to spread. In April, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen professed (for the first time in public) that he had long "doubted (the) appropriateness" of "the Holocaust Museum currently being erected on the Mall." Cohen proposes using the $147 million to build a Holocaust Museum in soon-to-be-reunified Germany, "at the site of the crime." The extensive effort to collect Holocaust artifacts would thus be linked to the political history that gave rise to them. It's an inspired idea. There will surely be other uses to which the current site and partially completed building could be put. It might even be used for an institution designed to explore the "dark side of human civilization." But Congress or an appropriate commission should decide explicitly on such a public purpose and consider how the sweep of American history—and not a single group's concerns—can best tell that story. □

EDMOND JABÈS

(Continued from p. 42)

is specific to its language, is the thorough exploration of that relationship, accounting both for Israel's desire for place (normality)—in the Land Set Apart or in Exile—and its hunger for the sacred or what is endowed with meaning by relation to the Transcendent, to what is before one.

Yes, the lacunae grant us precious little detail about Abraham and Isaac on their way to Moriah; no, we don't get much in the way of realism when it comes to Jacob or Solomon or Isaiah. And what the Bible does offer may be only the bare bones of a mood, a syntactic evocation, a minute alteration of vocabulary, a charged preposition, an inconspicuous particle. But the intensity of the dialectic, the manifold (if fragmented) image of creation, is maintained throughout, as the tradition of rabbinic commentary attests.

The sacred book of the Jews, in other words, is a book of sitings that graph the essential tension between the conflicting challenges of exclusion and homecoming, spirit and law, expression and attention, estrangement and worth. To reduce the text to a focus on any one of these poles, as Jabès often seems to, is to distort it fundamentally—for Jewish fundamentalism is as much a contradiction in terms as is Jewish spiritualism.

Jabès's Jewish detractors (secular and observant) are not simply envious that a newcomer has expropriated their sacred sources for literary distribution. (*The Book of Questions* has little to do with that much-vaunted and equally maligned phenomenon, the Bible as Literature.) Their objections relate, rather, to an essential cheapening, a false, even mechanistic spiritualization that they sense in Jabès.

The problem is similar with regard to the primarily exilic interpretive texts of the midrash, Talmud, and Kabbala—which are willfully constructed along a dialectic of many truly various voices that establish past and future tradition as they are reread and interpreted. It is this tension and diversity, along with the attendant range of personality, that is conspicuously absent in Jabès, particularly once one moves beyond the first three volumes of *The Book of Questions*. Just as Jabès's often cloying metaphors lack attention to detail (to *interpretation* of the *loi* derived sophistically from *oeil*), just as they are not challenged or developed by alternative interpretation and hence mislead or fail to carry one beyond the most convenient sort of semantic shifting of weights, so too does his reading of Jewish tradition bog down "in the beginning." (And even here it is curiously limited in comparison to the traditional midrashim.)

Worse, by the time one gets to *Yael, Elya, Aely,* and *El* (the final four volumes of *The Book of Questions*)—where new phantom lovers, aspects of the word, are introduced in the ghostly wake of Sarah and Yukel—Jabès has begun to anticipate and valorize the failure of his language to redeem. Sisyphus has begun reading Camus and admiring him. The work thus becomes open to the charge of having failed to account honestly for the evolution of the author's desire. As such, it looks increasingly like a Judaism hatched in the lotus position, a dull, binary notion of identity that never ventures beyond the initial revelation of the paradox at the heart of the text, which holds that inscription represents both All and Nil:

> One: diagonal across the circle.
> The void revealed across the one.
> One: visibility of the circle.

In an ever-growing sea,
O survival of a grain of salt.

A page later, Jabès is "playing" in kabbalistic tradition with charts:

N U L
L'U N

While nothing can be of literary value without at least an indirect understanding of this paradox, and while this understanding—like yogic breathing—may be the most accessible of operations to envisage but the most difficult to carry out, its limited realization in the work of Jabès hardly seems to merit cornerstone placement in the construction of contemporary Jewish identity. As long as the background equation of the Holocaust love story and "the nature of things" is maintained, the distortions of Jabès's equation are understandable, as the author tries to speak what can't, shouldn't, and yet must be spoken. But as that background drops out of the equation (itself highly objectionable to some readers) and is replaced in the later work by a more narrow focus on the limits of language, Jabès's spiritualized reading of Jewish tradition is shown to restrict and cast doubt on his powerful earlier accomplishment.

In a passage that grazes at a tangent his ever-invoked remark about poetry and Auschwitz, Theodor Adorno warns against precisely this distortion:

> And it is only infatuation, the unjust disregard for the claims of every existing thing, that does justice to what exists.... The eyes that lose themselves to the one and only beauty are Sabbath eyes. They save in the object something of the calm of its day of creation.... One might almost say that truth itself depends on the tempo, the patience and perseverance of lingering with the particular: what passes beyond it without having first been guilty of the injustice of contemplation, loses itself at last in emptiness.

In *The Book of Shares,* Jabès inscribes an opposite warning. "Watch out for infatuation," he says. "It has an aftertaste of lies."

Two contradictory aesthetics. Adorno evokes a lyricism stern with paradox. Every bit as moral in his preoccupation as Jabès, he returns to the initiatory moment of perception, of what comes to one as though miraculously against a background of the impossible—in a calm that the word "Sabbath" repeats. Even in the most abstract version of Adorno's minim of relatedness one is called to account for the detail of that relation—its particular tempo, the quality of one's perseverance and patience in the face of the manifest unjustness, rather than (as Jabès would have it) the *falseness,* of so limited and exclusive a focus. In painting one thinks of those other Jewish artists of endless variations on the One Note—Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman.

Alongside Adorno's commentary, as beside the work of Rothko and Newman, Jabès's aphorisms appear crude, unevolved. They strike a formulaic pose of intensity and involve not "horizon" but a line drawn in a dare to be crossed. Approaching them in the admittedly veiled English of the translations, one finds them less "beyond signification" than maddeningly loose in their abstraction:

Never will a knife blade get the better of steel bars.

Never will sand disown sand.

My limits are my liberty.

The principle of tension here again involves a dramatic casting of the obvious, rather than an engagement of true opposites or rivals for our attention. We're given the vertigo of Jabès's infinity reflected in language, but the effect is mechanical—that of a Ferris wheel rather than a thought. And the rest of what we know about the world is swept away as so much confetti. From a writer who draws so deeply from the margins of utterance and the essential shadow-quality of meaning, one would hope for a more particular attention to the "objects" casting that shadow and establishing a given margin—justified or not.

We're given the vertigo of Jabès's infinity reflected in language, but the effect is mechanical—that of a Ferris wheel rather than a thought.

Such hope is rewarded in the jottings of Elias Canetti, Jabès's contemporary and fellow diaspora Jew. In the recent *The Secret Heart of the Clock,* Canetti writes very much in the "Jewish" tradition of *The Book of Questions*:

At the edge of the abyss we cling to pencils.

Language exchange-booths.

That is an aphorism, he says, and quickly shuts his mouth again.

The semicolon's dream.

Here there is a tension and release of palpable engagement with difference that suspends my judgment. The horizon—the mark of otherness—has been incorporated. The more I know, the more it is work like that of Canetti, not Jabès, which speaks to me through the antithetical ethos that sends Abraham into the homecoming of exile and the rabbis into the detail of the Book.

And yet, I also know that it isn't that simple. In the minute particulars of their renderings, Adorno and Canetti both remain faithful to the rites of representation, to the demands of literature—though at the same time they incorporate in their rite an understanding of the essential limit of that representation and emphasize the severity of its edge. Jabès, on the other hand, reductively refuses to accede to the standards of the art—persevering, instead, in a monotonous, if independent, linguistic ritual beyond the literary that allows his enlistment in the series on postmodern religion.

Not surprisingly, *The Book of Shares* is threaded with an impulse toward expiation and apology for any distortion involved in his effort:

> If you happen to speak of my relation to Judaism, do not ever call it Judaism, but this particular Judaism.
>
> ...
>
> Forgive my works. They have the excuse of despair.
>
> ...
>
> He handed me a book which I opened rather hastily. However, as I tried to decipher it, the text vanished.
>
> ...
>
> All that for an "almost"?

Also not surprisingly, this intrusion of the autobiographical soon gives over to the crux of the new book: a more abstract meditation on the nature of limit and division, which in turn leads to a discussion of sacrifice, or the notion of "shares."

Again, however, the treatment is strong on intention but disappointing in practice. Jabès on sacrifice comes up only with a convenient and hackneyed lexicon of cutting, burning, and offering—applied in the most reductive sense to the sacrifice of mind—as the ashen trace of thought is consumed by the flame of thinking. The echo here is that of the priestly ritual, the Shoah of Nazi Germany, the kabbalistic notion of the Torah's being inscribed by a black fire on white fire, and the "lingering smell" of an infinity of "burned moments." When he departs from the hyperbole of holocaust, Jabès recovers a more credible and characteristic feeling for the modest offering, the Levitical "fine flour" or the Ecclesiastical "handful of quietness":

> Who can say how a trembling as faint as that
> of a rose losing its first petal could survive
> the book?
>
> The book says nothing but this shiver.

Jabès's offering, the belief implicit in the body of his work, is also before the God of shares Who created the world by an act of separation reproduced in the structure of consciousness. But far from achieving a redemptive (a worth-giving) homage or drawing-near to his God of the margin, as in the detail and commentary of the Book of Leviticus, Jabès seems driven by a decidedly un-Jewish desire for a return to and reproduction of "the virgin thought; a path through the forest, cleared by a knife."

This *is* a kind of religion, but it is catastrophically limited in its implications for both writing and Jewish identity by its author's obsession with the Zero of his binary scheme, rather than with the nature of the consciousness that creates ex nihilo humankind in its image and an alphabet of swarming particulars. In his obsession with the purity of the origin—the blank page—resisted categorically in Jewish tradition, Jabès fails to detail the Judaism of the interim, which is to say, the culture of its own terminology.

Is despair a sufficient excuse? Is exile?

Mistrusting the particulars of infatuation, which he associates with an outmoded eloquence, Jabès cannot move beyond the most generalized (if anguished) weekday anticipation of the Sabbath. Unequal to the complex challenge of Adorno's Sabbath-mind, in the face, perhaps, of twentieth-century history, he is unable to site the wound into which he would write. On its own terms, then, and despite its powerful though problematic contribution to the literature of this century, and its heartfelt and equally problematic donation to the body of Jewish literature, the work compels serious interrogation.

"Has the graphing of this essential moment of the margin, cast for the most part in a drowsy vocabulary of 'shiver' and 'rose,' been worth it?" is a question readers of Jabès may find themselves asking long before the final pages of *The Book of Shares*. For my part I suspect that I'll answer it as I have on previous occasions—by offering up money for Jabès's next book, with a grain of salt I'll think of as also Levitical. □

THE WORKSHOP AND THE WASTELAND

(Continued from p. 44)

ambiguities of their situation.

It is not easy to keep up the pretense of being on the wrong side of the stockade when you are tenured faculty at an American university. As a former poet-colleague of mine once said, "We must never tell anyone the truth about this job." More than this, however, we live in a country where, up until recently, it has been easy for writers thinking about their own lives to mistake the presence of democracy for the absence of politics. The autobiographical moments and stock characters that take up so much space in contemporary American poems—those tortured fathers, beautiful girls from high

school, and wonderful story-telling, bread-baking grandmothers—all seem to emerge from some ahistorical universe where private and public worlds fail to impinge on one another.

In North America we are living, of course, in what Philip Roth has called the World of Total Entertainment—and everyone, poets included, is in danger of getting sucked in. The best efforts of individuals to purify the dialect of the tribe are as nothing next to the mawkish seductions of commerce and celebrity. The poetry ratings are down, and what can poets learn from the culture about raising them? Only that newsreaders are more interesting than the news the papers bring and that contemporary viewer/listener/readers are, above all else, voyeurs.

The *desire* to hear people say something that matters in poetry was still in evidence in Jerusalem, however, which gives hope that it may be latent here. I became fully aware of this yearning during an evening of the festival which, on the surface, looked as if it had been scripted by Ionesco. The Turkish poet Ilhan Berk was reading. Unfortunately his first poems had not been translated into English, and the screen behind him was blank; nor was a Hebrew translation provided. No one had any idea what his poems were about. When he finished there was loud applause. I don't think it was only politeness. The audience seemed to be clapping because they recognized that someone had been trying to tell them the truth. They were applauding the idea of poetry. □

SPECIAL FEATURE

(Continued from p. 54)

that the promise of eventually reversing the broad decline in living standards may not be kept. A similar discrepancy between promise and performance of Communist regimes helped bring down the governments of Eastern Europe. Although the United States is well into the sixth year of an economic boom, there is evidence that business is emphasizing short-term gain rather than long-term planning. Productivity growth remains sluggish, at about half the level of the 1947–73 period, and technological advance is lagging. American corporations are investing more overseas, not only in low-wage operations but in high-tech research and production as well. Meanwhile, comparative analyses by social scientists suggest that nations such as West Germany and Sweden lead the international economic parade precisely because they have strong unions, vital leftist parties, and broad social welfare policies—all of which constitute barriers to the short-term, low-wage strategies elected by American business under the banner of neo-laissez-faire.

The other weakness of neo-laissez-faire is simpler and more enduring, and it bears on Eastern Europe as well as the United States: democratic polities are not likely to tolerate for very long policies that contribute directly to the disorganization and even destruction of human lives and communities. □

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That's the bad news.

As Alan Snitow points out in this issue of *Tikkun*, it's not inevitable that old reactionary nationalisms will triumph. Democratic forces have also sprung up and entered the fray. But it's a struggle ... and one in which Jews can play an important role.

The *good news* is this:

Liberal and progressive Jews around the world will be getting together to discuss their strategies for dealing with the new world situation. Whether it be the desecration of graves in France, or the appointment of an overt anti-Semite to Gorbachev's cabinet, or the appearance of anti-Semitic lyrics in rap music, we can all sense that something new is putting the issue of anti-Semitism back onto the public agenda. How these developments are related to the policies of the State of Israel is one of the dimensions that we will be exploring.

The international conference of progressive Jews will not just deal with that issue. To counter the Shamir/Rabin claim that most diaspora Jews will support Israel publicly no matter what it does, and no matter how much they grumble privately, this gathering will be billed as Solidarity with the Israeli Peace Movement. Many peace-movement activists believe that this gathering will strengthen their hand in Israel. We will discuss with Israeli peace activists the way to coordinate strategies around the world to support the peace movement. And we will deal with the issue of Jews and power: How does the fact of having power in the State of Israel, and to a lesser extent in the U.S., mesh with traditional Jewish self-conceptions, with the original promise of Zionism, and with our own inner psychology?

The breakdown of certainty in traditional socialist and Zionist ideologies now makes possible, for the first time in ninety years, the kind of conversation amongst Jewish intellectuals and activists that was blocked in the past by ideological rivalries and dogmatism. And the situation in Israel and in Eastern Europe makes this conversation imperative. This will be the first attempt to have an international dialogue amongst the Jewish liberals and progressives who are not the house-pet intellectuals of the Jewish establishment.

In addition to Jewish issues, we will address the entire political and cultural range of issues facing liberal and progressive intellectuals on a world scale. From the alleged triumph of capitalism to the status of NATO, from the issue of an intellectual canon and cultural pluralism to new developments in feminist theory—this will be a major gathering of Jews who are grappling with the central intellectual and political questions of our time.

It won't just be plenary sessions. The morning will be dedicated to study sessions with classes taught by international luminaries (for example, Michael Walzer on Jewish political thought and Benny Morris on the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict). There will be small group discussions and workshops on practical as well as theoretical issues. And there will be cultural and social events.

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