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

Managing Editor's Archive

TIKKUN

Israel Update: *Sidra Ezrahi, Aaron Back, David Forman, Yaron Ezrahi*
Reviews: *Sven Birkerts, Frank Browning, Jonathan Boyarin, & Norman Weinstein*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1991 $5.00



POLITICS OF RACIAL IDENTITY

Gary Peller

Responses by: **Nathan Glazer, Michael Dyson, & Thomas Edsall**

T.V.'s Anti-Families
Josh Ozersky

Poetry & Midrash
David Curzon

Work Pain, Family Pain
Michael Lerner

Agnon
Evan Zimroth

90's Feminism
Felicia Kornbluh

Feminism & Science
Joan Scott

Kahane
Chaim Seidler-Feller

Failed Commies
Maurice Isserman

Fiction
Amos Oz

IRAQ

Todd Gitlin, Michael Walzer, Eric Alterman, Fred Smoler, Barbara Ehrenreich, Stephen Rosenfeld, Milton Viorst, & Mitchell Cohen

01
64858
0 306775 8

In the Coffee Shoppe

Daughters of Israel Home

Enter a zone of silence and abandonment,
A rubber atmosphere of tips of canes,
Of walkers hesitating like funambulists
In the middle of the wire. And my mother
Who marched 5th Avenue against the Nam
Is pushed around like a paraplegic vet.
And wheeling her as she me in my pram,
We proceed to the kindness of the Shoppe,
Two scoops with maggot sprinkles on the top.
And though she sits like a Hadassah lady
At a lunch, my mother has become a mouth
As I was at the oral stage. "Food is love."
I feed her strawberry sundae from a spoon.
She tries to eat the paper napkin too.

—Aron Krich

Aron Krich has been publishing poetry for over fifty years. His only novel is Sweethearts *(Crown, 1974).*

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 6 NUMBER 1

2 **Letters:** On Iraq, on Circumcision
6 **Editorial:** Our Opposition to Bush's War with Iraq
9 **Free Associations**

Articles

11 Josh Ozersky **TV's Anti-Families: Married . . . with Malaise** "The Simpsons," "Married . . . with Children," and "Roseanne" may not be as liberating as they first appear.

15 Michael Lerner **Pain at Work & Pain in Families: Publishing as Healing** What psychotherapists at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health learned about the psychodynamics of self-blame in work and family life—and how, in the pages of *Tikkun,* the Institute's findings could be the basis for massive social healing.

21 Chaim Seidler-Feller **Not by Might and Not by Power: Kahanism and Orthodoxy** Why has Orthodoxy aligned itself with violence?

23 Felicia Kornbluh **Feminism: Still Hazy After All These Years** For women in their twenties, feminism poses unique challenges—particularly the urgent task of redefining feminist issues in ways that speak to working women.

27 Evan Zimroth **Agnon and Ecstasy** The Nobel Prize–winning writer S. Y. Agnon's novel *Shira* shocks with its perverse obsession with sexuality and disease.

31 David Curzon **Tradition Unbound: Poetry as Midrash** Out of the ashram and into the fire of Jewish religious vision.

32 **Voices from Israel** The inside "feel" of an Israel reeling from Palestinian stabbings of Israel civilians—plus what the peace movement should do *now.* **Sidra Ezrahi, Yaron Ezrahi, Aaron Back,** and **David Forman.**

38 **Iraq: Further Reflections** Whether we face war or a negotiated settlement, the struggle with Iraq raises fundamental political and moral issues about the post–cold-war order. We present reflections by **Todd Gitlin, Fred Smoler,** and **Eric Alterman;** an interview with **Michael Walzer;** plus a roundtable discussion with **Barbara Ehrenreich, Mitchell Cohen, Stephen Rosenfeld,** and **Milton Viorst.**

Special Focus: THE POLITICS OF RACIAL IDENTITY

54 Gary Peller **Race Against Integration** The troubled legacy of integration's triumph in the 60s should cause us to reappraise what Black nationalists had to say about racial identity and history. The Black nationalist message caused special anxiety among assimilated American Jews who turned to the universalism that was the ticket to acceptance in Christian America. Responses by **Nathan Glazer, Michael Dyson,** and **Thomas Byrne Edsall.**

77 **Reviews:** Joan Scott on feminism and science; Sven Birkerts on the poetry of Robert Pinsky and Stephen Mitchell; Maurice Isserman on Timothy Garton Ash; Frank Browning on gays during World War II; and Jonathan Boyarin on Jewish intellectuals in France.

71 *Fiction: To Know a Woman* Amos Oz
77 *Music* Norman Weinstein
53 *Poetry* Gary Pacernick

Cover art: *Black Girl, White Girl* by Gregory Grenon. Oil on Plexiglas, 26¼ × 33½ × 6 inches, 1990. Courtesy of Jamison Thomas Gallery, Portland, Oregon.

Photography: The photographs on pages 7 and 57 are by Lydia Gans; on pages 9, 35, and 47, by Oliver & Steinberg © 1990; on page 17, by Jane Scherr; on pages 14, 36, and 61 by Denise Poncher; on page 19, by Richard Bermack.

Line drawings: The line drawing on page 12 is by Jack Lefcourt; on page 52, by Anthony Dubovsky.

TIKKUN

Editor and Publisher:
Michael Lerner
Associate Editor:
Peter Gabel
Assistant Editor:
Chris Lehmann
Book Editor:
Michael Kazin
Fiction Editor:
Marcie Hershman
Poetry Editor:
Marge Piercy
Literary Editors:
Phillip Lopate, Leonard Michaels, Francine Prose
Contributing Editors:
Paul Berman, Daniel Boyarin, E. M. Broner, Todd Gitlin, Josh Henkin, Mikhail Iossel, Christopher Lasch, Ruth Messinger, Ilene Philipson, Anne Roiphe, Lisa Rubens, Gina Morantz-Sanchez, Milton Viorst, Steve Wasserman, Eli Zaretsky
Production Manager:
Valerie Sacks
Editorial Assistant:
Rebecca Lemov
Assistant to the Editor:
John Plotz

Assistant Publisher:
Craig Sumberg
Production Intern:
David Hollenberg
Publishing Assistants:
Miriam Pollack, Lorraine Zimmerman
Controller:
Valerie Bach Vaz

Israel Office:
Aaron Back, Beth Sandweiss
Editorial Consultants:
Christina Büchmann, David Gewanter, Amy Gottlieb, Shifra Raffel, Josh Weiner
Interns:
Claude Cahn, Paul Eiss, Rachel Yassky
Proofreader:
Marcella Friel
Typesetting:
turnaround, Berkeley; Generic, Emeryville
Production:
Emily Douglas

Editorial Board

Martha Ackelsberg, Rachel Adler, Gar Alperovitz, Michael Bader, Michael Berenbaum, David Biale, Rachel Biale, Norman Birnbaum, Heather Booth, David Bromwich, Abraham Brumberg, Jay Cantor, David Cohen, Gerald Cromer, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Elliot Dorff, Peter Edelman, Leslie Epstein, Sidra Ezrahi, Gordon Fellman, John Felstiner, Nan Fink, Gordon Freeman, Saul Friedlander, Maurice Friedman, Amos Funkenstein, Laura Geller, Herbert Gold, David Gordis, Arthur Green, Joshua Greene, Colin Greer, Morton Halperin, Richard Healey, Robert Heilbroner, Hal Jacobs, Burt Jacobson, Marc Kaminsky, Reuven Kimelman, Daniel Landes, Hillel Levine, Irving M. Levine, Milton Mankoff, Tzvi Marx, Daniel Matt, Marshall Meyer, Jo Milgrom, JoAnn Mort, Raquel Newman, Ilana Pardes, Shana Penn, Victor Perera, Yoram Peri, Robert Pinsky, Judith Plaskow, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Aviezer Ravitsky, Lillian Rubin, John Ruskay, David Saperstein, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Howard Schwartz, Chaim Seidler-Feller, Gerald Serotta, T. Drorah Setel, Gershon Shaked, Stanley Sheinbaum, Carol Ruth Silver, Uri Simon, Daniel Thursz, David Twersky, Al Vorspan, Arthur Waskow, Arnold Wolf, Seth Wolitz, A. B. Yehoshua, Idith Zertal, Steve Zipperstein

Letters

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

IRAQ

To The Editor:

Your symposium on Iraq (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1990) was energetic, insightful, and raised in me some of the same inner conflicts you describe yourself as having gone through. I've always been with the Left against American imperialism—but I don't see how the "new world order" that we on the Left have been talking about can be built if Saddam Hussein gets away with his aggression against Kuwait.

Then there's the old fantasy that the United Nations should take over the military action. But how could this work? Why should we trust the UN with an army that it really *did* have under its control? What reason do we have to think that such an army would be used against Iraq—rather than against the West or against Israel—to rectify the basic structural inequalities that are the underlying context of so many of the world's struggles. While I *want* a redistribution of the world's resources, I don't want it imposed by the United Nations. And who, excactly does the UN represent? Most of the governments represented in the UN cannot claim to represent their *own* people and are often guilty of violating basic human rights! So why give them the power? If it's right to use force to drive Saddam out of Kuwait, or to dismantle his offensive military capacity, then why would it be any less right if done by the U.S., which actually might do it, than by the UN, which might not?

Sara Fine
Los Angeles

To the Editor:

A war against Iraq could have disastrous consequences for all involved and it is especially difficult to see how it would be good for Israel or for the Jews. Certainly, Saddam Hussein is a despot and aggressor and the support extended to him by small sectarian groups on the Left is unconscionable. Nonetheless, the Bush Administration's exaggerated military response to the invasion of Kuwait threatens to trans-

Tikkun (ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly by The Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit corporation.
Editorial offices: 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619; (415) 482-0805. Book reviews: Michael Kazin, Dept. of History, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016; (202) 885-2415.

Copyright ©1990 by The Institute for Labor and Mental Health. All rights reserved. Opinions expressed in *Tikkun* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board or of the people listed on the masthead. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a SASE, or they will not be returned.

Israel office: Rehov Gad 8 Aleph, Jerusalem 93622; (02) 720455.
משרד בישראל: רחוב גד 8א, ירושלים 93622; (02) 720455
Subscriptions can be placed by calling (800) 545-9364. $30 for 6 issues, $60 for 12 issues, $90 for 18 issues. Add $7 per year for all foreign subscriptions (including Canada and Latin America). Please pay for all orders in U.S. funds (including postal money orders) and with checks drawn from a U.S. bank only. Institutional subscriptions: $40 for 6 issues. Limited availability of back issues—inquire at editorial office.
All subscription problems can be dealt with by our subscription service: *Tikkun,* P.O. Box 332, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0332. Please allow 6–8 weeks for any subscription transaction, including receiving your first issue, solving subscription problems, or changing your address. (You may get a bill or a renewal notice after you've already paid or renewed. Please disregard. Bills and payments cross in the mail.)
Articles appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Political Science Abstract, The Alternative Press Index, Book Review Index, Index to Jewish Periodicals,* and *Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO);* in *Magazine Index, Magazine Index Plus,* and *Academic Index,* all available from Information Access Co., (800) 227-8431; and in *The Left Index.* Book reviews appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBBR).* 16 mm and 35 mm microfilm, 105 microfiche and article copies are available from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Selected articles are also available via *Tikkun Online* in the Jewish conference on the WELL. Audiotaped back issues of *Tikkun* are available free of charge for blind or visually impaired people. Contact the library at the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc., (212) 889-2525. U.S. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870; (800) 221-3148.

form an inter-Arab conflict into a worldwide catastrophe. To avoid endless enmity in the Middle East, the devastation of oil-dependent Third World and Eastern European countries, the creation of more refugees, and the founding of a new international order based on violence, the Gulf crisis must be settled through diplomatic and nonmilitary means. War under any circumstances would only postpone Israel's choice of the most viable route to security: negotiations with the Palestinians to end the occupation and to satisfy both sides' need for security and self-determination.

While some may believe this approach is inadequate, the alternatives are worse. Starting a war is hardly a way to solve a crisis. Nor is it obvious how a war in the Gulf could be contained once it was started. While terms like "surgical airstrikes" and "taking out Iraq" have entered into the public vocabulary from the argot of right-wing militarists, there has been little discussion of what Daniel Ellsberg calls the "butcher's bill." If war breaks out, through a surgical strike or other means, Iraq would likely try its utmost to intensify and widen the conflict in the hope of splitting the coalition arrayed against it. A frequently discussed possibility is for Iraq to turn an Iraqi–United States conflict into another Arab-Israeli war by launching a chemical missile attack on Israel or by moving troops into Jordan. If so, the butcher's bill could be tens of thousands of Arab, American, European, Israeli, and Palestinian lives.

Unfortunately, there is little reluctance in Israel, even in the mainstream peace camp, about getting involved in a war should Saddam Hussein exercise his "Jordanian option." The security-conscious dove Yossi Sarid said in the Knesset last August that "Israel must declare that the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan would constitute a *casus belli*" for Israel. Similarly, in a public letter on behalf of Peace Now, Mordechai Bar-On wrote, "We do support the Israeli resolve not to tolerate the entrance of any Iraqi forces into the Kingdom of Jordan or any changes in Jordan's current regime." Thus by calling in *Tikkun* for a United States strike against Iraq, Yossi Sarid seems to be pressing for the creation of the very conditions that he believes would warrant Israel's involvement—since as noted above, such an attack is likely to cause Iraq to move troops into Jordan.

In the Shadow of the Holocaust
The Second Generation

By **AARON HASS.** *A selection of the Jewish Book Club.*
"It is Hass the storyteller who penetrates the real mysteries of the tortured body and soul and allows us to understand the strange and terrible burdens the second generation has been forced to bear from earliest childhood."—*Los Angeles Times.*

"*In the Shadow of the Holocaust* is among the very best in the Holocaust literature, an exemplary model for the rest of us who study others and try to make sense of what we see and hear."
—Robert Coles, Harvard University.

With a blend of oral history, memoir, and psychological interpretation, Hass offers a new understanding of the effects of the Holocaust on the members of the second generation. In conversations with him, adult children of survivors discuss such topics as their relationships with their parents, the importance of their Jewish identity, their attitudes toward Gentiles, and their ability to believe in God. Himself a child of survivors and a clinical psychologist, Hass writes about the lingering presence of the Holocaust in his own life as well. $19.95

At bookstores or from
Cornell University Press
124 Roberts Place
Ithaca, NY 14850

Moreover, if the United States and Iraq go to war, many in the Israeli government, especially Ariel Sharon, will see an opportunity for realizing their long-proclaimed idea that "Jordan is Palestine." In line with such opportunism, an unnamed aide to Prime Minister Shamir told a reporter "If we have war with Iraq and the Arabs make trouble behind our lines, they will soon find themselves outside" (*Ha'Aretz,* August 8). As *Yesh Gvul* spokesperson Hanoch Livneh astutely noted, "In case of war, there is a special need to be alert to the danger of large-scale deportation of Palestinians being carried out while public attention is diverted elsewhere."

Michael Lerner is right that a war between Iraq and the United States would be particularly abhorrent if waged on behalf of cheap oil (Bush's "American way of life") and the monarchies and emirates of the Persian Gulf whose borders the West created. But the idea that a war is needed to defend Israel and eventually to establish a demilitarized Palestinian state hardly constitutes a more palatable argument for the Bush administration's European (let alone Arab) allies or for the American public. First, whatever threat Iraq poses to Israel can only be increased in the event of war. Second, going to war to defend one occupying power while opposing another is not likely to garner support, regardless of differing historical circumstances or of future promises to the Palestinians. Third, the idea that Israel needs to be defended contradicts the "strategic asset" argument previously used to sell support for Israel to the American public, particularly to the right wing. Coming now, this reversal of Israel's image can only confuse the American public and is not likely to make it more eager to have American troops risk their lives. Fourth, Israel, with America's help, has become a formidable military power that is at least Iraq's match. Finally, it is touching and neat but rather cut off from the nastiness of war and diplomacy for Lerner to think that the United States could cut a deal on its own that would force Israel to agree to a demilitarized Palestinian state as a quid pro quo for clobbering Iraq.

The possible disasters of an American-led war would not be necessarily avoided if conflict were to be conducted under

UN direction—as Lerner and some others seem to believe. A far better approach would be a series of UN peace conferences aimed at settling the outstanding conflicts of the region. In addition to the Iraqi–Kuwaiti conflict, these would address the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the reconstruction of Lebanon, and controls on both conventional and nonconventional arms in the Middle East. Such an approach is needed for the sake of all of the people in the region as well as for our own.

Elissa Sampson, Paul Zissel, and Marilyn Neimark, *International Jewish Peace Union* Roger Hurwitz, *New Jewish Agenda* Rabbi Philip Bentley and Joyce Bresler, *Jewish Peace Fellowship.*

To The Editor:

Some liberals talk about the conflict with Iraq as though it were started by the U.S. bent on world domination. But in invading Kuwait, Saddam killed and wounded thousands and created hundreds of thousands of refugees (many of them Palestinians who are now returning to Jordan and the West Bank with tales of Iraqi attrocities that far exceed anything suffered at the hands of Israelis). I suppose Americans would not have forgotten this had Bush started an armed struggle immediately after the invasion. That he waited, and sought UN sanctions and authorization for military involvement, allowed the appearance of a hiatus between Saddam's invasion and America's response, thereby creating the possibility for some leftists to talk as though the U.S. would be *starting* a war if it were to engage in hostilities. Yet had Bush acted immediately, without taking the time to obtain UN backing and attempt the sanctions approach, many of these same people would have been howling just as loudly. I can only conclude that the only thing that would make them happy is if the U.S. were to shut its eyes, hoping that eventually the bad dictators of the world would be sated with their conquests. But I see nothing in history or contemporary political reality that justifies such a hope.

Irving Katzman
Washington, D.C.

To The Editor:

Have you gone off your rocker? Like most Americans, you must have been victimized by watching one too many Rambo movies.

You have succumbed to the arrogance of power and completely lost any ability to think two, three, four, or five moves deep about what happens after the U.S. starts searching, destroying, and killing hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Iraqis.

You talk about war as though you were a Pentagon general, oil-company apologist or National Security bigshot rather than an ordinary soldier or civilian on either side of the front lines.

Shame on you for peppering your article with Orwellian "IOMC" acronyms, supposedly standing for "Iraqi Offensive Military Capability," which is also doublespeak. Such quasi-fascistic linguistic gimmicks only enable you to remove human life from your equations. There are no "surgical strikes"—that is only one more doublespeak fantasy rooted in superpower thinking.

Once tens of thousands of Iraqis, both teenage soldiers and their civilian families, lie dead in the rubble of "surgical strikes," what will those still alive, and the rest of the Arab world, *then* think of Americans and Jews? What will they *then* be willing to do about it? Do you really think the prospects for peace with justice will be enhanced?

Carl Davidson
Chicago

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's notion of "cultural containment" is the most important contribution to the new thinking that we need to deal with the post-Cold-War world that I've read anywhere. To "contain the drift toward craziness and war while accentuating the drift toward sanity and peace" seems to me a very worthwhile goal—and if the international conference that he, Lerner, and Ellsberg all seem to be calling for could do that, I think we should certainly try it before proceeding any further with the current headlong rush toward war.

But containing the drift toward craziness can't be done in the way that the current assemblage of people creating a new antiwar movement are apparently trying. If the U.S. or Israel had ever used poison gas against a minority population and killed thousands, it would be mentioned by every left-wing speaker—but Saddam's brutalization of the Kurds and his brutal repression of domestic dissent are barely mentioned, and then largely excused. I've been to several "teach-ins" and rallies that simply substitute demonizing of America for demonizing of Iraq or Saddam. Moreover, I've seen a tendency toward sweeping anti-Israel statements that appear to me to be overtly anti-Semitic. I'm a strong supporter of the Israeli peace movement and of *Tikkun*'s call for a demilitarized Palestinian state, so I sympathize with pressure on Israel to change its policies, but what I've seen in this newly emerging antiwar movement is an insensitivity to the rights of the Jewish people to national self-determination that would be recognized as overt racism were it manifested in any other context. Maybe *Tikkun* should play a role in trying to bring together more rational antiwar forces so that the current group of crazies doesn't dominate the scene?

Joseph Klein
New York

To the Editor:

Your editorial stand on Iraq said publicly what many of us in the Israeli peace camp are feeling privately but dare not say: that a settlement with the Palestinians seems politically impossible unless Iraq's offensive military capacity is dismantled. Those of us who have been arguing that we could live in peace with the Palestinians once they acquired their own state are now, after the Palestinian embrace of Saddam, looked upon as pathetic idealists. Those who think that Israelis are going to agree to any kind of Palestinian state as long as that state could plausibly ally itself with a militarily powerful Iraq are simply deluding themselves. And deluding the Palestinians. Those who wish to see Palestinians acquire genuine self-determination in their own land had better hope that the Iraqi military threat is quickly and dramatically reduced.

By linking the Palestinian issue with the need to dismantle the Iraqi offensive military capacity and with peace treaties between Israel and its Arab antagonists, you have created a strategy for avoiding war and giving Iraq a

face-saving way to achieve what the rest of the world needs: a declawed Iraq.

We can't say these things publicly in Israel, because everyone is afraid to let Saddam say that the U.S. war against him was really covertly aimed at achieving Israeli needs. The irony here is that the right-wing Israeli government is best served by the status quo, because it can now use the threat of Saddam as a justification for abandoning any pretense of negotiations with the Palestinians. An American peace movement that kept America from acting decisively against Saddam might unintentionally help guarantee decades more of powerlessness and oppression for the Palestinians.

Mordecai Ha'Tishbi
Tel Aviv

Tikkun Interns

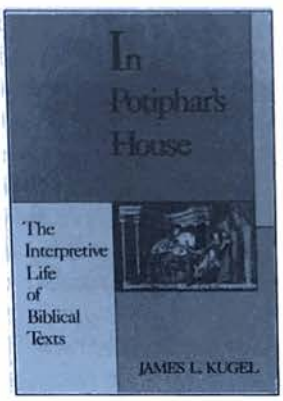
A perfect way to enter the world of ideas, social change, and journalism. *Tikkun* interns work at our office in Oakland or with our operation in Jerusalem—reading manuscripts, helping build conferences, responding to mail, soliciting financial help, doing office work, proofreading, and all other aspects of running a magazine. Minimum time commitment: Summer: 35 hrs./wk.; 9 month commitment: 25 hrs./wk. No pay, but great company (and some interns eventually get hired)! Send self-revealing personal letter to: Interns c/o *Tikkun*, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619.

Want to be a Tikkun Activist?

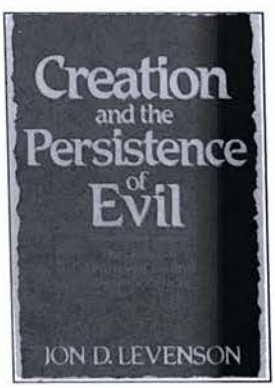
Would you like to become active in circulating *Tikkun* ideas in your area? Or in organizing a *Tikkun* salon or discussion group? Or in creating a mini-conference in your region? Are you primarily interested in spreading our ideas about a mass psychology of compassion, working on issues around Israel and the Palestinians, or in some other issues? Let us know. Write us a letter letting us know who you are, what you are interested in working on, and what time or resources you have available. Write: *Tikkun* Activist, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619.



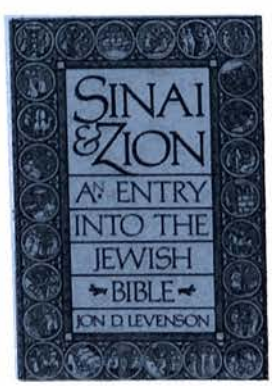
The Spirit of the Ten Commandments
Shattering the Myth of Rabbinic Legalism
Roger Brooks
"Every sensitive scholar and theologian, regardless of religious background, will find in this book a model of how good scholarship can transcend accepted stereotypes with fresh and creative insights into the nature of the religious doctrines of Judaism."
—Tzvee Zahavy, professor of classical and Near Eastern studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Hardcover, 160 pages, #0611327, $19.95



In Potiphar's House
The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts
James L. Kugel
"Combines profound erudition with sheer literary excitement. . . . Reflects a mastery of the field of early biblical exegesis, but also keeps the reader completely fascinated. . . . The final chapter offers a brilliant summary of the workings of biblical exegesis as a whole."—Brevard Childs, professor of Old Testament, Yale University
Hardcover, 208 pages, #0649079, $33.95



Creation and the Persistence of Evil
The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence
Jon D. Levenson
"What Levenson has achieved in *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* is no less than an innovative theology of creation. . . . It should be useful not only to biblicists but to theologians as well."—*Journal of Religion*
Hardcover, 160 pages, #2548451, $18.95



Sinai and Zion
An Entry into the Jewish Bible
Jon D. Levenson
"A challenging, exciting work in Jewish theology. Not to be missed."—*Sh'ma*
Paperback, 240 pages, #2548287, $9.95

Available through your theological bookstore or Harper San Francisco, Torch Order Department, 151 Union St., Suite 401, San Francisco, CA 94111
Or phone TOLL FREE 800-328-5125
Also available from HarperCollins Canada Ltd.

HarperSanFrancisco
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*

EDITORIAL

Our Opposition to Bush's War with Iraq

Michael Lerner

I should have known that my argument justifying the use of force as a last resort to dismantle Iraq's offensive military capacity would be misunderstood and misrepresented as support for the actual war that Bush has been preparing. I was wrong not to be more cautious in articulating my position.

The war that Bush is preparing should be opposed. I had argued that the use of force might be justified if and *only* if the U.S. had first tried to do everything in its power to dismantle Iraq's offensive military capacity through other means, chiefly a strictly enforced economic blockade and an international conference at which all issues concerning the Middle East—including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—would be on the table. But Bush has not given time for economic pressure to work, nor has he been willing to explore possible avenues for negotiations. Meeting with the Iraqi foreign minister and sending Secretary of State James Baker to Iraq with strict orders *not* to negotiate anything, but merely to convey the U.S. position, is *not* an adequate substitute for seriously exploring negotiations—particularly because these moves were made only after the Senate hearings held by Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) had shown that opponents of Bush's current policy included some of the nation's former military leaders and several of its normally hawkish international strategists. The release of American hostages provides an adequate pretext for Bush to change his stance and begin real negotiations.

Bush opposes negotiations until Saddam withdraws from Kuwait. Negotiations might well be seen as a face-saving opportunity, which would reward Saddam for his aggressive behavior. And Saddam might muddy the waters by insisting that the issue of Palestinian rights be brought in for negotiation (just as he did when agreeing to meet with Baker). Moreover, the resolve of the American people to face down Saddam's aggression, already faltering if recent polls are to be trusted, might evaporate if we got bogged down in a long series of negotiations.

I can understand that these are legitimate concerns for Bush—but they are *not* legitimate reasons to rush into hostilities. When we began negotiations with the Vietnamese after the Tet offensive, it was not to reward them for their efforts, but out of a recognition that they were the enemy, and had to be talked to. For the same reason, we've advocated that Israel should negotiate directly with the PLO. The "reward" argument is a destructive way to approach talking with an enemy.

Far from fearing that an international conference might bring up the Israeli-Palestinian issue, we should welcome that prospect. It is in Israel's interest to have the issue resolved by establishing a demilitarized Palestinian state. A conference that simultaneously achieved the dismantling of Iraq's offensive military capacity and a demilitarized Palestinian state would be a great contribution to peace in the region. And it's only through such a conference that the focus could be shifted from Bush's narrow aim of "Iraq out of Kuwait" to the much more important aim of stopping the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. An international conference of this sort would have been a meaningless talk fest without the show of U.S. military resolve. But now that the U.S. has demonstrated its seriousness, it ought not to proceed when the UN's January 15th deadline expires, but instead should agree to a conference in which *all* regional issues would be on the table. For those of us who are deeply concerned about Israel's survival, nothing would be better than a regional settlement that developed a plan for progressive demilitarization of *all* countries in the region, starting with Iraq's nonconventional weapons, but eventually including Israel's nuclear capacity. Given the overwhelming conventional power of the surrounding Arab states, Israel would be rightly hesitant to trade away its nuclear capacity for the elimination of nonconventional weapons in the Arab states. But *if* a comprehensive plan were worked out whereby surrounding countries progressively dismantled their offensive military capacities, it would certainly be in Israel's interests to make similar concessions on a scale appropriate to its security needs. A regional solution, if phased in gradually, and if comprehensive enough to address all of Israel's legitimate fears, could include a demilitarized Palestinian state, peace treaties with the Arab states, and a dramatic reduction of the quantities of all kinds of arms in the region. The U.S. is going in precisely the wrong direction by avoiding these kinds of negotiations and by defining the issue in such a way that these kinds of linkages, and hence a regional solution, are ruled out a priori. Nor is it sensible to worry that considering these questions grants a victory to Saddam Hussein. If such a conference were held under conditions in which the

economic and political boycott remains in force, there are two possible outcomes: a.) the conference is a success, in which case Iraq is demilitarized—Saddam can then crow as much as he wants about being the savior of the Arab peoples, since he would no longer be a military danger to anyone; or b.) the conference fails, in which case the military options remain, and the boycott may conceivably have weakened Saddam in the meantime.

As for the U.S. public's resolve, it could be ensured if Bush were to lay out a long-term strategy that gave the economic boycott much more time to work, sought to achieve the appropriate goals through an international conference, and simultaneously prepared for military intervention should all else fail. Americans are not fickle—they would stay committed to reasonable goals and a reasonable strategy, if they were told the truth. Recent polls indicate that the only goal for which Americans *would* be willing to fight Iraq is to stop nuclear proliferation—a quite reasonable position, but far from George Bush's ground war to liberate oil fields and restore the oppressive regime of the Kuwaiti emir.

Though I believe that at some point a just war could be fought against Iraq, the actual war Bush has prepared is *not* that war. I give him credit for seeking to legitimate his war effort through the involvement of the United Nations. This could be a very important precedent—particularly if it bound the U.S. to seek an international consensus before once again using naked force to pursue its own aims, as it did in Nicaragua and then in Panama. But for the sake of his misguided war aims Bush is likely to involve our troops in a *ground* war to achieve the liberation of Kuwait. In fact, a much more limited air war may be all that is required to dismantle Iraq's offensive military capacity.

If Bush continues on his mistaken path, it will matter a great deal that we have not exhausted other remedies before embarking on war. It will matter a great deal that we have not proved willing to pursue negotiations before using force. War has a momentum of its own that is often unpredictable and rarely beneficial. I see no reason for tens of thousands to die in a war of the sort that Bush is preparing to fight.

Moreover, to pursue his war, Bush is planning to send billions of dollars worth of arms to the racist and repressive Saudi regime, significantly endangering Israel in the process. And when he met with Syria's Assad he was willing to overlook Syria's role not only as a human-rights violator and a supporter of terrorism, but as an aggressor in Lebanon and a potential aggressor against Israel. This was the same kind of shortsightedness that led the U.S., France, and the Soviet Union to arm Iraq in the 1980s—and it may not be too many years hence that we will be shaking our heads in dismay when the new threats to peace come from U.S.-armed Saudi or Syrian regimes.

* * *

Former Senator George Aiken (R.-Vt.) once proposed that the U.S. simply declare a victory and leave Vietnam—his solution to the "face-saving" issue that may have kept the U.S. involved long after most strategists realized the U.S. had lost the war. Bush may have a face-saving problem of his own: how to get out of the war now that it appears that a sizable part of the U.S. population remains unconvinced of its wisdom, and a large part of Congress seems unwilling to give him a blank check.

Let me suggest a way that would make Bush a hero to all friends of democracy. Armed with the UN declaration that using force would be appropriate after January 15, Bush could announce that he was prepared to intervene militarily, but also knew that no war could successfully be prosecuted unless it had the full backing of the American people. For that reason, he could announce a nationwide referendum on the war. In early February he would mobilize the voting machines of the country and allow all registered voters to choose between the following propositions: a.) That the U.S. should go to war *now* against Saddam Hussein; b.) That the U.S. should postpone war for as long as another year to pursue a strategy combining strict enforcement of the economic blockade with vigorous attempts to negotiate a solution that achieved our aims—however, *if* the administration determined by next January that serious progress toward the solution had not been achieved, then it should adopt the military option; c.) That the U.S. should not under any circumstances use force to achieve its ends in relation to Saddam except to stop new aggression against his neighbors, and then only with a new vote by the UN authorizing that use of force. If no one of these received a majority, then a runoff would take place two weeks later. No matter which one won, Bush could not lose—he would have shown himself to be so committed to the democratic process that he was willing to stop the war that he had the power to prosecute because of his deep respect for the will of the people.



And such a precedent would usher in a new era of democratic constraints on foreign policy that would be a great boon to all of us. If option A were to eventually win, Bush would have his mandate. If options B or C were to win, Bush would have a way out that still saved face and won him the overwhelming respect of most Americans.

This may seem unrealistic at the moment. But the task of the antiwar movement now is to find some way for Bush to get out of this mess before it's too late. So it's worth proposing this, if only as a way of opening the conversation about how we can get the U.S. out of its current headlong rush to war. We don't want to wait till thousands of Americans and Arabs are dead before we succeed in finding a way to disentangle ourselves from the struggle.

And as long as we are on the topic of pleasant fantasies about how to change the current dynamics, let's also imagine one that would be wonderful for Jews. Israel could make a major contribution to resolving this whole mess if it were to take this opportunity to announce that it was going to negotiate "land for peace" seriously and aim for the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state. Such a move, coming now, would undermine Saddam's claim to be the only hope for the Palestinians. It would allow Israel to get better conditions than it is likely to get once it is forced into similar negotiations by the U.S. after it has waged a successful war against Saddam and forced Saddam out of Kuwait, and it would be a tremendous boon to Israel's credibility around the world.

That neither Bush nor Shamir are likely to heed these suggestions is no reason to fail to articulate them publicly. When we look back at ways to avoid a path to disaster, it's important to remember that there were real alternatives that an imaginative leadership could have pursued. More likely, unfortunately, we will have to spend our energies figuring out ways to build an antiwar movement.

★ ★ ★

We need a powerful and rational antiwar movement to counter Bush's projected plan for a war. But this is *not* Vietnam or Nicaragua. The issues are more complicated because we are dealing with a ruthless murderer and dictator who has hijacked the legitimate needs of his own people and tied them to acts of aggression that have outraged the entire world. True enough, the countries of the world have not backed their UN votes with troop commitments—but they have shown an unprecedented degree of solidarity in enforcing an economic and military blockade against Iraq, and they have recognized that Saddam's actions require a forceful response.

Historian and antiwar activist Ruth Rosen, hoping to avoid the mistakes of the movement against the Vietnam war, has some powerful advice for the new generation of activists who have been launching teach-ins and demonstrations around the country: Don't romanticize the enemy. Don't factionalize but instead honor difference and cultivate decency toward each other in the antiwar movement. Avoid simplistic slogans and ground the case against war in a deep knowledge of the history of U.S. foreign policy. Remember that U.S. soldiers are *not* our enemies but rather people whose lives we want to protect. Finally, be sure to reach outside the campuses and remind every American that we are sending an army of the poor to war.

To Rosen's list I'd add the following: Don't allow legitimate antiwar goals to be mixed with illegitimate Israel-bashing and anti-Semitism. It's legitimate to call on Israel to make peace with the Palestinians and to vacate the West Bank; and it's legitimate to support, as we do, an international conference in which all regional issues including the Palestinian conflict are on the table. But it is *illegitimate* to morally equate Israel's occupation of the West Bank—a response to military aggression from Jordan, and maintained because a large number of Israelis believe (mistakenly, we think) that otherwise they'd be more vulnerable to military assault—with Iraq's naked act of aggression.

★ ★ ★

Though some suspect that Bush's meeting with the Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz and James Baker's meeting with Saddam Hussein were intended as, mere window-dressing to provide political cover for a war, we hope that by the time you read this Bush will have used the hostage release and the apparent willingness of Saddam to cut a deal on Kuwait as reasons to postpone using a military option. That Bush had to take the "one last step" toward peace in December was testimony to the growing antiwar sentiment in the U.S. and a tribute to the courage of some members of Congress who were willing to confront the administration publicly with tough questions about the wisdom of Bush's policies (for a view opposing our own, see Eric Alterman's article in this issue).

Welcome as a peaceful solution would be, we think there are dangers here that must also be avoided. We warned all along that Bush's aims were inadequate, that the goal should *not* be to restore the emir of Kuwait, but to dismantle the Iraqi offensive military capacity and create a comprehensive solution to the problems of the region. Until that is achieved, and until Iraq is willing to give up its stated aim of attacking and destroying Israel, an international boycott against Iraq's

military should be enforced.

To leave Israel alone to face a militarily strong Iraq could easily lead Israel to make preventive strikes that would lead to a regional war. Once it had withdrawn from the area, America might sit back feeling that its hands were clean. But it was the U.S., France, Germany, and the Soviet Union that gave Iraq its sophisticated armaments and aided in the development of its unconventional warfare capacities—so we, and *not* Israel, have the moral burden of dismantling this threat to peace.

So although we would rejoice if Saddam were to back down and withdraw from Kuwait, we deeply oppose the tendency toward a new isolationism, whose adherents believe the U.S. can wash its hands of the consequences of conflicts that it helped to shape. If war can be averted, this is precisely the moment to move vigorously toward an international conference. And we must ensure that such a conference would force Israel to move beyond Shamir's empty plans for Palestinian autonomy and toward a substantial settlement granting Palestinians full national sovereignty in exchange for an enforceable demilitarization and the renunciation of all further claims on Israeli territory. If, as we've argued here, ending conflict with Saddam now allows us to explore an even fuller demilitarization of the entire region, Israelis, Palestinians, and the world at large will have much reason to be thankful. □

Free Associations Free Associations Free Associations Free

Member of Knesset Avram Burg (Labor) articulated the reaction of many religious doves to the ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) Agudat Yisrael party's decision to join Shamir's right-wing government, which came in exchange for Shamir's promise to ban pork, prohibit sexually provocative advertising, and put further restrictions on abortion and publicly owned bus transport on the Sabbath. Burg pointed out that by trying to force the secular Jewish majority to obey religious laws, the ultra-Orthodox were turning Judaism into a faith that would be hated by many Israelis. Burg also suggested that, since Agudat has joined Likud's "bloody government," Labor should launch a campaign to end military deferments for yeshiva students, and let them fight in the wars that the right-wing hawks so passionately endorse. While many religious doves oppose sexually provocative advertising and would prefer to see an Israel without pork, they oppose the use of government coercion to impose a religious order and believe that many more Israelis might be open to Judaism if it were freed from the coercive program of the ultra-Orthodox.



Free Associations Free Associations Free Associations Free

Electoral non-choices faced most voters in November once again. Bernie Sanders's victory as a socialist candidate for Congress in Vermont and the election of progressive Paul Wellstone as a Senator from Minnesota, whose opponent, incumbent Rudy Boschwitz, unsuccessfully tried "radical baiting," showed once again that candidates who present a principled opposition to the established mush that passes for political dialogue can win. On the other hand, when Democrats try to sell themselves with Republican themes, the voters often go for the genuine item rather than the nicely packaged substitute. Dianne Feinstein won the Democratic nomination for governor in California by talking about her commitment to the death penalty. But with conservative look-alike credentials, Feinstein had a tough time mobilizing grassroots supporters to go door-to-door on her behalf. If the electorate was looking for "toughness," they could find a much more likely candidate in Republican Pete Wilson. He won.

Downplaying your beliefs in order to get a larger audience didn't work too well for environmentalists either. To make Earth Day 1990 the "biggest environmental event in history" thousands of environmentalists went along with programs that avoided all the difficult political debates and substituted recycling for rethinking. The payoff: in November California's "Big Green" initiative was only the best known of dozens of environmental measures defeated at the polls. Avoiding controversy in April may have made Earth Day a bigger media event, but it didn't do much for educating the public to withstand the propaganda assault that corporate interests inevitably launch against meaningful environmental legislation.

Israel's President Chaim Herzog waxed eloquent at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations. He condemned the UN for "prejudging" Israel's behavior in the Temple Mount massacre without having conducted an open investigation in which Israel could present its side. Yet neither he nor any of the three thousand American Jewish leaders assembled could find time to condemn Israel's arrest the day before of Ziad Abu Ziad (the editor of *Gesher,* a Hebrew-language Palestinian paper) and Radwan Abu Ayash (the chairman of the Palestinian Journalists Association). Arrested under the human rights–violating "administrative detention" provision of Israeli law, the Palestinian moderates were sent to jail *without charges being filed against them and without any chance to defend themselves in court.* Ziad, whose article in the November/December 1990 issue of *Tikkun* appeared two weeks before his arrest, was particularly effective in speaking to Soviet immigrants and the Sephardic working class about the Palestinian position. Peace Now activists in Israel believe that Ziad and Radwan now languish in prison precisely because they showed that there *is* someone to talk to.

Pentagon Chief Dick Cheney admitted in testimony at Senator Sam Nunn's Armed Services Committee hearing on December 3 that the Pentagon had strict orders *not* to reveal to U.S. citizens prior to the November 6 elections that President Bush had already decided to double the amount of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia in order to achieve "an offensive capacity." Cheney defended the administration's secrecy on the grounds that revealing this information might have been seen as an attempt to manipulate public opinion just before the elections. Instead, Bush chose to hide his decision, making it impossible for American citizens to debate it or make electoral choices based on how the candidates might react to this information.

Send us your TV or movie scripts. We've complained enough about television and the movies. It's time to do something. That's what some *Tikkun* readers had in mind when they recently suggested to us, after reading our critique of "thirtysomething," that we try to propose a TV series based on the lives of sixties activists who were still trying to support social change in the nineties. The idea that somehow we might find a way to take *Tikkun* ideas into the electronic media seemed plausible, despite the obvious obstacles.

We'd like your ideas for movies, for sitcoms, for TV series, for latenight TV, for educational programs, documentaries, etc. We are looking for ideas that take the compassion and energy and political framework of the *Tikkun* worldview and find ways to present it in television format. We want ideas that are intellectually, psychologically, and morally deep—but that can also play in Hollywood. We may print some part of your idea or screenplay.

TV's Anti-Families: Married ... with Malaise

Josh Ozersky

It's an odd thing when a cartoon series is praised as one of the most trenchant and "realistic" programs on TV, but there you are. Never mind the Cosby-size ratings: if merchandising says anything about American culture, and it does, then America was utterly infatuated with "The Simpsons" in 1990. "Utterly," because unlike other big winners in the industry such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and the New Kids on the Block, the Simpsons graced not only t-shirts for the clamoring young, but t-shirts (and sweatshirts and posters and mugs) that went out in droves to parents, who rivaled kids for viewer loyalty.

The animated series chronicles the life of the Simpson family: father Homer, who works in a nuclear power plant and reads bowling-ball catalogs; mother Marge, with her blue beehive hairdo and raspy voice; misunderstood-bohemian daughter Lisa; baby Maggie; and bratty son Bart, the anti-everything star of the series. Bart appeals to kids, who see a flattering image of themselves, and to their parents, who, even as they identify with Bart against his lumpkin parents, enjoy Bart's caricature of their own children, with his incomprehensible sloganeering ("Don't have a cow, man!") and bad manners. Nor, tellingly, has the popularity of the show stopped with the white mainstream: a black Bart soon began to turn up in unlicensed street paraphernalia.

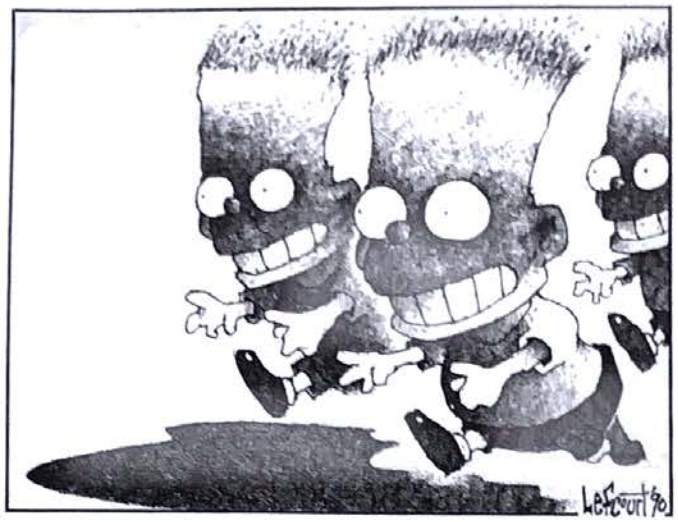
In the first of the unauthorized shirts, Bart was himself, only darkened. The novelty soon wore off, however, and in successive generations Bart found himself ethnicized further: "Air Bart" had him flying toward a basketball hoop exclaiming "In your face, home boy." Another shirt had Bart leering at zaftig black women, loutishly yelling "Big Ole Butt!" at their retreating figures. And in later versions, Bart has a gold tooth, a razor cut, and an angry snarl—the slogan "I got the power!" juts overhead in an oversized balloon.

The "I got the power!" Bart is barely recognizable, disfigured by rancor. But even more jarring than his appearance is his vitriol, so out of keeping with the real Bart's laid-back, ironic demeanor—an endemic condition among TV characters. The naked discontent on that shirt is jarring, disturbing. It lacks the light touch. TV does not—but then the playful suppression of unhappiness has always been one of TV's great strengths; and in its latest, ugliest form, it subtly discourages alarm at the decline of the family, its own complicity in that decline, and the resulting effects on a disintegrating society.

The success in the last few seasons of new, "anti-family" sitcoms, such as Fox's "Married ... with Children" and "The Simpsons" and ABC's "Roseanne," began a trend that has made waves in television. "Whether it's the influence of Bart Simpson and those cheeky sitcoms from Fox," wrote *TV Guide* in September, "or ABC's artsy anti-soap 'Twin Peaks,' unconventionality is in; slick and safe are out." The "cheeky sitcoms" began that trend. "Roseanne," about an obese and abrasive proletarian mom, and "Married ... with Children," a half hour of pure viciousness, represented along with "The Simpsons" a new development of the situation comedy, TV's definitive genre. Each program (as well as its inevitable imitators) focuses on a family marked by visual styles and characterization as bleak and miserable as those of former TV families had been handsome or cheerful.

The innovation received a lot of attention in the mass media, most of it favorable. Richard Zoglin in *Time* hailed the "real-world grit these shows provide," produced psychological authorities, and quoted Barbara Ehrenreich's wide-eyed "Zeitgeist Goddess" piece in the *New Republic.* The *New York Times*'s Caryl Rivers wrote approvingly of the new realism, although she noted perfunctorily that gays, minorities, and women were less visible than they should have been. What all sides had in common, however, was a willingness to point out the improvement over other forms of TV. "The anti-family shows aren't against the family, exactly, just scornful of the romantic picture TV has often painted of it," Zoglin pointed out. "We're like a mutant Ozzie and Harriet," Simpsons creator Matt Groening boasted in *Newsweek,* which went on to point out that the show was "hardly the stuff of Saturday-morning children's programming." "Thankfully, we are past the days of perfect Mom and all-wise Dad and their twin beds," wrote the *New York Times*'s Rivers, speaking for reviewers and feature writers everywhere. And this was prior to the advent of the "unconventional" mystery serial "Twin

Josh Ozersky is a New York media critic.



Peaks," which still has feature writers striving for superlatives to describe its "innovations" and "departures."

This unanimous juxtaposition of the "anti-families" to the stern TV households of yesteryear is a specious comparison designed to amuse and flatter. Not as the result of any conspiracy—writers in the commercial mass media generally write to please, and what they say is true enough if you have as your entire frame of reference the past and present of TV. But far from the "authenticity" it pretends to, the "grit" for the new shows is merely an improved artifice, a challenge only to the verisimilitude of art directors and casting companies. By pretending to realism, TV only extends its own hegemony, in which every standard of comparison points back to another sham. "Gosh," gushed *TV Guide* of Bart, "can you imagine Bud Anderson being so ... *disrespectful* to Dad?" As if the lead of "Father Knows Best" had only recently become a figure of fun.

It is through this sort of pseudo-self-deprecation that TV tries to ingratiate itself with Americans, who in an age marked by pervasive irony want to run with the hare and hunt with the hound—to feel superior to TV and yet keep watching it. TV offers this target audience an abundance of self-images that will permit them this trick. The target viewers may be enlightened, making the "choice of a new generation" by seeing through "My Little Margie," or avant-garde, on the cutting edge, for watching "Twin Peaks," which, like "Hill Street Blues" before it, supposedly "breaks all the rules." They are in utter harmony with the very mechanics of TV production, which has no secrets from us, as we know from David Letterman's insider gags, such as the "Late Night Danger Cam."

As for discrediting paternalistic authority figures, Mark Crispin Miller has pointed out that the imperious Dads of fifties TV, now such a rich source of burlesque, were overturned by a maturing medium very early on. The "grim old abstinence" of the Puritan patriarch stood in the way of the "grim new self-indulgence" of consumer culture and was hence banished. Dads turned into "pleasant nullities," like Dick York in "Bewitched" and Timothy Busfield in "thirtysomething," or unenlightened butts of knowing and self-flattering jokes, like Archie Bunker and Homer Simpson.

The downfall of Dad, however, saw no concomitant rise of Mom or the kids. Rather, it was advertisers and corporations that benefited from the free-spending self-indulgence of all parties, liberated from patriarchal discipline. And the networks, of course, cashed in and sold advertisers airtime. In the world beyond the screen, the family has disintegrated into epidemic divorces and deteriorating marriages, latchkey children, and working parents reduced to spending "quality time" with their children, as though they were hospital visitors or the lovelorn spouses of soldiers on leave. Meanwhile, the TV world—not only in sitcoms but in endless "special reports" and talk shows and (particularly) commercials—insists again and again that we are hipper, more "open," more enlightened, and facing changing "relationships" in a new and better way. Mom, often divorced and underpaid, has her new "independence," a standard theme of programming, and Dad and the kids, faced with other losses and hardships, are offered the bold new "grittiness" of prime-time entertainment. TV has absorbed the American family's increasing sense of defeat and estrangement and presented it as an ironic in-joke.

This dynamic is seldom noted, although the mere *fact* of watching is noted by critics and commentators everywhere, and nowhere more visibly than on TV itself. The opening credits of "The Simpsons" end with the family, assembled at the end of the day, jumping mutely into fixed position on the sofa and clicking on the TV set. This absorption of criticism is and has been, except for sheer distraction, TV's greatest weapon against criticism. The transformation of the hearth into an engine of negation, after all, should have caused *some* stir. And so it would have, if TV were no more than the yammering salesman it has caricatured itself as in satirical moments. But, as Miller demonstrates, TV has never shown us TV; rather, it shows itself to us as a laughable, absurd, and harmless entity, much like the characters on its shows.

When not played for background noise—whooping Indians in older shows, unctuous game-show hosts or newsmen in newer ones—depictions of the TV set on TV itself render it invisible and omnipresent. TV itself, its conventions and production, may be the crucial point of reference for the sophisticated appeal it enjoys today, but the set as household centerpiece is seldom seen, and then only as a joke, as on "The Simpsons." Instead, the set most often poses as a portal to the outer world: hence its constant stream of images that

tease us with alluring beaches, blue waters, busy city streets. Even in its living rooms, where we know its presence to be inescapable, the TV is often missing. This effect is accomplished by a simple trick of photography: when the family watches TV in "All in the Family," in "Good Times," in "Married ... with Children," etc., the scene is shot from behind the TV set. As the family sits facing us, with the screen nowhere in sight, the illusion exists for a moment that the TV really is, if not a portal, then a mirror or reflection of us. A close look at these families, and at our own, soon banishes this impression. We are not like these TV families at all; and the TV set is obtrusive, ideological, and tendentious.

When speaking of the "anti-family" sitcoms, most of the commentators seem to have in mind "Married ... with Children." No other show so luridly plays up the sheer negativity of the current "authenticity" trend, nor does any other show do so with such predictable regularity. The series portrays the Bundys, a lower-middle-class family with two children and a dog. Father Al (Ed O'Neill) only has "knotted bowels" to show for his life supporting the family. Peg (Katey Sagal) is Al's castrating wife. There is also the inevitable sharp-tongued teenage son, who singles out for special heckling his brainless and sleazy sister. The relentlessly ironic quality of a happy family turned thoroughly upside-down flatters the audience for their enlightenment (no "Donna Reed," this) even as it invites them to enjoy the ongoing frenzy of spite in which the show indulges. And frenzy is indeed the word. Every member of the family despises everyone else, and any given program consists of little more than continuous insults, interspersed with snide loathing or occasional expressions of despair.

> Father (to son): Did I ever tell you not to get married?
> Son: Yeah, Dad.
> Father: Did I ever tell you not to become a shoe salesman?
> Son: Yeah, Dad.
> Father: Well, then I've told you everything I know.

This sort of resigned and paralytic discontent dominates the tone of "Married ... with Children"; it lacks even the dim rays of hope that occasionally lifted Ralph Kramden's or Riley's gloomy existence. Every show is devoted to a new kind of humiliation: to earn extra money, Al becomes a burger-flipper; when son Bud falls victim to a practical joke perpetrated by an old flame his slutty sister Kelly comes to his defense by crucifying the girl against a locker; wife Peg belittles Al's manhood in front of strangers. Again and again, the unrelenting negativity of the show finds new ways to expand, purifying itself of any nonironic, positive content. Lovebird neighbors intended for contrast in the first season soon divorce, adding to the show's already vast reserve of bitterness. Christina Applegate, the young actress who plays Kelly, filled out during the first two years, adding a missing element of nasty prurience to the show.

The result of this hermetic exclusion of all warmth, say a number of apologists for the show, is positive: "With these new programs," says Barbara Cadow, a psychologist at USC, "we see we're doing all right by comparison." Yet at the same time, it is the very "realism" of these shows that won them praise again and again. This "realism" appeals to a cynical element in us—no one would ever admit to resembling Roseanne Barr or her family, but they are eminently "realistic" portraits of the losers next door. Roseanne Barr is shrewish and miserable to the point of self-parody, and this is seen as the great strength of her series. "Mom" (who Roseanne, it is assumed, represents) "is no longer interested in being a human sacrifice on the altar of 'pro-family' values," says Barbara Ehrenreich in the *New Republic.*

We have the power to reject the defensive posture of materialist or ironist or cynic, and the soullessness of TV's "hip, bold," anti-life world.

The praise of the same style of TV both for its realism and for its horrific exaggeration, while apparently contradictory, is based on a common assumption. In each case, the pervasive unhappiness and derision on TV sitcoms is assumed to be a reflection, albeit a negative one, of the unhappiness of real families. Cadow assumes that it is caricature, and Ehrenreich that it is a manifesto, but neither woman doubts that both shows offer some kind of corrective to real life for their viewers, and that this explains their popularity. This congratulatory view of hit TV shows contains a fundamental error: the old network executive's rationale that TV "gives people what they want," in response to their Nielsen-measured "choice."

The concentration of mass media into a few corporate hands invalidates that idea even more today than in the past. Given TV's entirely corporate nature, it is unreasonable to assume that the channels are referenda, since almost every channel, at least until recently, offered almost identical options. What succeeds with the public makes it, yes. But that "success" is determined by TV's agenda—which now, as always, is more than selling dog biscuits. Consumption must be

encouraged psychologically; sectors and tendencies in American society have to be identified and exploited. "Since the major broadcasters are no longer winning the big numbers," observes *TV Guide,* "they're now fighting for the youthful demographics that bring in the highest revenues. That's why everyone is hyping bold, hip shows."

Of course, the success of a culture based on mass consumption depends on the creation of boundless needs; boundless needs presuppose boundless discontent. Boundless discontent must begin with the family, where social patterns are first internalized. If, latchkey in hand, TV can flatter a kinless and dispossessed child into adulthood and at the same time kid his or her parents about it, perfect consumers are thereby made. The family becomes a breeding ground for easygoing and independent citizens of the marketplace, transported beyond the inner struggle and deep feeling of family life, and bound in their place by the laws of supply and demand, consumer "choices," and a continual negation of their truest selves.

By presenting unhappy families to viewers, TV achieves many gains. First, as Cadow rightly points out, mocking the traditional family does flatter the distorted family of our times. However, this does not necessarily lift spirits. On the contrary, it lowers expectations; it stupefies discontent instead of healing it. "Married ... with Children" is the prototype of this strategy. The petty or profound resentments of real families do not rival those of the Bundys, but then neither does their ability to punish and humiliate each other. By making our problems "seem all right by comparison," the series trivializes them rather than taking them seriously. It in fact worsens them by its counsel of despair.

Secondly, the dysfunctional TV family aids advertisers in their perennial quest for credibility by creating a supersaturated atmosphere of irony, which atrophies our ability to believe in anything. Commercials themselves work on a principle of pseudo-rebelliousness. Burger King—now officially touted by the Simpsons—proudly sports the "radical" motto, "Sometimes you've gotta break the rules." Swallowing these giant absurdities relies not on credulity, but on an ironic, self-assured disbelief. "Roseanne," with its trademark sarcasm, and "Twin Peaks," with its tongue-in-cheek grotesqueries, are good examples.



Third, and most insidious, is the stability of TV's dysfunctional families, and their passive acceptance of their fate. A successful cast is the source of "ensemble acting," which has been the formula for success for some time now on TV. Since TV characters now move in herds, they do not get divorced, move out, have devastating affairs, or anything else that would disrupt the fabric of the show's format. Implicitly, these shows assure us that family life is largely a nightmare, but one that is self-perpetuating and only requires handling with a deft, protective irony. This irony, the antithesis of deep feeling, is the essential assault on the family and on all human relationships, reducing them to problems of managerial acumen. Thus, while remaining intact in their own impoverished world, sitcom families undermine the stability of real families, discrediting the embarrassingly earnest, often abject bonds of kin while hermetically sealing themselves off from the possibility of familial collapse. And this while they consume the increasingly rare time in which American families are actually together.

"The Simpsons," the most popular of the group and certainly the least ironic and "anti-family," is TV's most effective reinforcer. This paradox begins with the fact that the show is a cartoon: with their yellow skin, bulging eyes, and comical motions, the Simpsons are funny just to look at, and hence relieve the audience of the need to continually jeer at them. The Bundy family of "Married ... with Children," like all sitcom characters, aspire to the televisual purity of cartoon characters, but are stuck in rubbery bags of protoplasm with nothing but one-liners and a laugh track to hide behind. The Simpsons, oddly, are freer than other TV families to act human.

And so they do. There is an element of family loyalty and principle to be found in the Simpsons, often combined with witty and valid social criticism. Brother Bart and sister Lisa petulantly demand of baby Maggie to "come to the one you love most," to which the infant responds by crawling lovingly to the TV. Or again, when father Homer's sinister boss inquires disbelievingly, "You'd give up a job and a raise for your principles?" Homer responds (with almost none of the usual sitcom character's irony), "When you put it that way, it does sound farfetched—but that's the lunk you're lookin'

(continued on p. 92)

Pain at Work & Pain in Families: Publishing as Healing

Michael Lerner

Tikkun gets much attention for its Jewish agenda—particularly its role in creating a voice for Jewish progressives and supporting a renaissance of Jewish thought and creativity. But its larger agenda of healing and repair in American society has sometimes been less clearly understood by the liberal media, probably because it challenges rather than supports some of the assumptions of liberal intellectuals.

If you've been reading *Tikkun* for any length of time you probably know that we think there are some fundamental emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of reality that liberal intellectuals do not adequately understand or address. I'd like to tell you how these ideas grew out of work that a group of us were doing at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. *Tikkun* is a project of the Institute, and an important part of our agenda has been to create an arena within which the ideas that grew out of the work we did and do at the Institute could get a hearing. It's also the story of why I've switched my activity from psychotherapy to magazine editing—in order to further the educational and healing goals that motivated me to become a therapist in the first place, as well as to further the goals of the Institute that I helped found and build, in order to address the pain that is so prevalent in American society.

I know that the second we mention "pain," or the need for a psychological perspective on social problems, we are likely to run up against a great deal of resistance from those "hard-nosed realists" for whom the words conjure up visions of California flakiness. I felt this response when, in the early 1980s, I first began to talk to the various liberal and progressive social-change movements about the need to create a progressive profamily agenda that could challenge the ascendancy of the Right. I wasn't particularly interested in party politics, or in advancing any particular candidate or piece of legislation, but rather in finding a way to explain to progressives why the idealism of the sixties had given way to the selfishness of the eighties. What I found, instead, was a deep-seated resistance to thinking in psychological, moral, or spiritual categories. That resistance may well have reflected the very problem that the Institute had set out to cure.

Many liberals and people on the Left lambaste psychological analysis, ethical discourse, and spiritual concerns as "middle-class" obsessions: working people have too many real-world problems (usually understood to be various economic deprivations) to worry about feelings and emotions. Yet the pain I discovered in America's families I discovered precisely through interactions with working-class families who came to seek services at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health.

The Institute was created by a group of psychiatrists, social workers, marriage, family, and child therapists, and social-change activists who wanted to develop an approach to psychology that could help working people empower themselves. Influenced by the thinking of Wilhelm Reich and by feminist approaches to psychiatry, by the practical experience of the "community psychology" movement, and by our own experience as social-change activists, we wanted to work not with those who already had been influenced by the social-change movements of the 1960s or by the countercultural assumptions that had permeated the consciousness of younger middle-class people by the mid-1970s, but with working people whose cultural assumptions were very different. Through our ties with the labor movement we were able to work with a sector of the working class that hadn't had much contact with social-change activists and often resented their lifestyle. The groups we created at the Institute were filled with telephone operators and installers, computer-data personnel and secretaries, nurses and hospital orderlies, bus drivers and rapid transit employees, workers for the local water and electric companies, engineers and technicians, teachers and employees of local government, truck drivers and dock workers, employees in large corporate bureaucracies and in the local park district, workers in social service agencies and nonprofit corporations, and local television and newspaper personnel. Though many of these people lived only miles away from middle-class yuppies, social-change activists, and the countercultural experimenters who inhabit some pockets of the Bay Area, they were by and large part of a culture that had more in common with the communities of the South and the Midwest, where many of their families had migrated from, than with the San Francisco alternative lifestyles that they occasion-

Michael Lerner is editor of Tikkun. *The second edition of his book,* Surplus Powerlessness, *which further develops the theory of a mass psychology of compassion, will be published by Humanities Press this spring.*

ally read about in the newspapers.

In our research, we quickly came to understand that among many working people there was a deep stigma connected to seeking these services, because working people believed that in approaching a mental-health service they were identifying themselves as "crazy" or at least as deeply disturbed. We wanted to find a way to lessen this stigma, so we eventually began to train union shop stewards as "agents of destigmatization." Our hope was that we would discover how the stigma worked and how it could be combated.

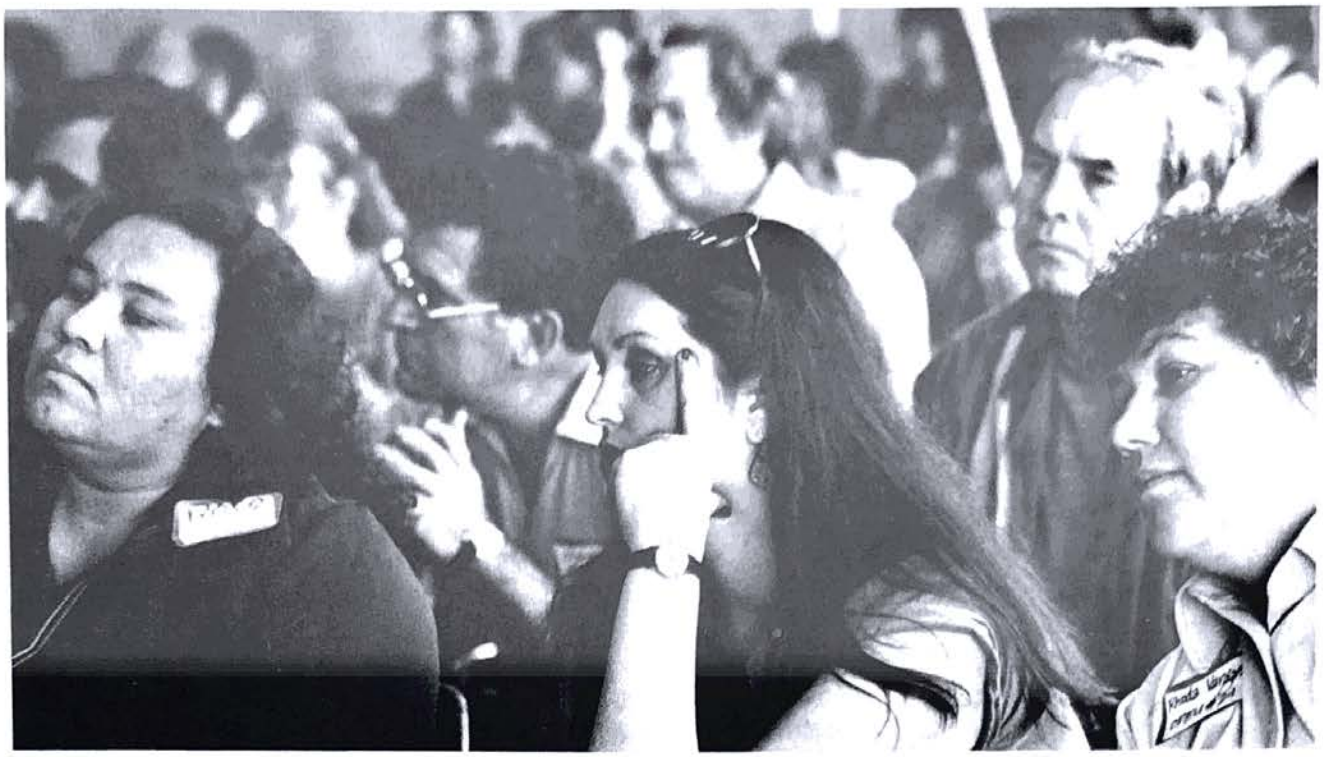
Shop stewards do the same jobs as their co-workers, but have volunteered time to be the union representative at the work site. The shop steward hears all the complaints and funnels them to the appropriate person in the union or in management. Since the stewards in our project were workers themselves, they were ideally suited to becoming our ears and eyes in the workplace.

The shop stewards met with us in training sessions one night a week. We taught them psychological and social theory, and they taught us about the realities of the workplace. We developed strategies together for talking with their co-workers about their lives and their situations at work. What we began hearing, over and over, was that even those workers who appeared to be "most together," that is, most emotionally healthy and successful and well liked, were experiencing a great deal of inner pain about their jobs and their lives. At first these stories concentrated on "private life"—the troubled families, heavy alcohol and drug consumption, and the desperate attempts to forget about the world of work through various after-work escapes. But eventually the shop stewards began to tell us that they were uncovering something else that startled them: virtually all their co-workers were nurturing feelings of self-doubt and self-denigration because they had jobs that were unfulfilling and alienating.

In fact, it was almost a classic confirmation of early Marx—before Marxism was vulgarized by economistic thinking and then adopted by Eastern European ruling elites to justify state-centralized systems of domination. The workers were *not* primarily upset about the amount of pay that they received (though this certainly bothered them to the extent that they *interpreted* it as a sign of how little they were valued), but rather were most upset with the daily denials of their self-worth that were built into their jobs. Most of these workers had jobs that did not allow them to use their intelligence, creativity, aesthetic sensibilities, cooperative instincts, or many of their skills and talents. Each day they were confronted with the fact that the work world assumed that they were less together, less powerful, less intelligent than they could be or wanted to be. And more and more as their lives went on, these workers began to feel that the reason they were in these kinds of jobs was that somehow they deserved to be there. For some, the tension between who they felt themselves to be and who they were becoming as workers in this job gradually decreased, so that they would tell you that the job and all its limitations fit who they were as human beings. Often they disliked the job, but believed they didn't deserve any better, because they just were not together enough to handle anything else. Others, who knew that they really could handle a job that used their talents more thoroughly, blamed themselves for not having done something at some earlier point to keep themselves from ending up with unfulfilling work.

Both responses reflected a deep and pervasive self-blame. Having grown up in a society that constantly asserts that it is a "free" world in which *anyone* can make it by really trying—a world in which the only criterion for individual success is merit—most Americans have come to believe that what they have *actually achieved* is the perfect reflection of what they *deserve to achieve*. So deep is this belief in the correlation between worth and achievement that even when we began talking to unemployed auto workers whose plant had been closed down because the competition with Japanese autos had forced General Motors to scale down its production, these workers still fiercely held on to stories of individual self-blame. They told us that their unemployment was their own fault: they had been stupid to have trusted in the auto industry in the first place. It wasn't that they didn't also blame the auto industry—they knew, for example, that they could have made factory production much more efficient if it had been they, and not the corporate managers, who had designed the production process. Yet at a deeper level they blamed themselves, not the corporations, and not the larger system.

The deep levels of self-blame these workers harbored explained in part why they did not attend union meetings or attempt to engage in collective action to change the workplace. On one level the reason was obvious: the union meetings were themselves often a continuation of the same infantilization that they experienced at work. Boringly bureaucratic, the unions tended to avoid any serious discussions of world, national, or even local politics, of the economic and political realities of the corporation, firm, or bureaucracy where workers spent much of their lives, and of the daily realities they faced at work. Instead, the meetings were dominated by internal union business and always avoided anything that might stir the workers up or lead them to make demands on the union leadership. Still, one might wonder, why did the workers go along with this? Why didn't they insist that the union meetings address the daily pains and assaults on their dignity that they were ex-



periencing at the workplace? We learned, first from the shop stewards and eventually from their co-workers directly, that they didn't feel that it made any sense to talk about this painful situation because they had no one but themselves to blame for being in it, and it felt pointless or self-destructive to reveal to others what a mess they had made of their own lives. Better to try to forget about it all, hoping that they could escape the world of work into "private life."

But "private life" was not working to provide this escape. In fact, the dynamics of the world of work could not be forgotten, the pain could not be adequately drowned in liquor, drugs, or television. And so many of these same workers reported that their families and personal lives were also painful and frustrating—but they saw no connection between this and what had been happening to them all day long.

To learn more about the connection, we and the shop stewards organized weekly occupational stress groups and family support groups, designed for "healthy workers" facing "normal stress." We sought American workers who might not need psychotherapy as traditionally conceived, and whose life situations would be judged "normal" by most outside observers. To avoid narrow self-selection, we began a citywide campaign of public education. We bought signs on buses and huge billboards all around the Bay Area with messages such as "Powerlessness at work is bad for your health" and "Everyone faces stress at work" to try to get across the idea that people were *not* "sick" or "deeply troubled" if they sought help in dealing with occupational stress.

Our occupational stress groups were run as training rather than therapy. Participants received workbooks that helped them identify stressors at work, and learned relaxation exercises and communication skills. The groups also taught workers about the realities of the social world—the inequalities in power and wealth that made it possible for one group to exercise disproportionate influence in politics and in the shaping of the "free" marketplace. Groups discussed how management exercised control over workers, how workers were set up against each other, how racism and sexism had been used to divide working people, and the history of union struggles, including the conversion of some unions into instruments of management control. We encouraged workers to use their own experience to imagine how they would redesign their own work worlds, and then the larger firms or bureaucracies of which they were a part, if they had the power to do so.

Half of our stress-group time was devoted to this kind of teaching and to learning relaxation and stress-management techniques. The other half was devoted to workers talking about their work world and their family lives. And it was in this connection that we began to see how the stresses at work were brought home into personal life, despite the frantic attempts to "forget about work." Some used alcohol, drugs, or TV to escape the pain and frustrations that they had experienced all day. Others engaged frenetically in activities that were perfectly legitimate in their own right—aerobics or exercise or sports or religion or politics or socializing—but did so in a way that was aimed at deadening their own

consciousness so that they would stop feeling what they had been feeling at work.

The problem is that people who are trying to deaden their pain and are succumbing to self-blame are poor candidates for love and intimacy, which require a willingness to share and be open with loved ones. Their partners soon find that it is impossible to "get through" to these people, that in some important way they are cut off and inaccessible—which often makes their partners feel lonely or emotionally abandoned. And the anger that builds up at the workplace frequently emerges in the form of a generalized irritability or seemingly irrational anger in personal life. As a result, minor irritations suddenly explode into major problems. Whether it be in major explosions of anger or in a general irritability, depression, or inability to give adequate loving attention to loved ones, occupationally stressed workers (and, it turns out, *most* workers are) find themselves acting in ways that undermine their closest loving relationships. Rather than understanding this as an unfortunate by-product of an oppressive work situation, however, most workers interpret this as further proof that they don't deserve happiness or success. "Just as I screwed up my life in the world of work," we were frequently told, "I've managed to screw up my personal life as well." The ideology of self-blame is so deeply held that it seems almost intuitively obvious to most Americans. Having little understanding of the larger social context within which they live their personal lives, they are quick to adopt sophisticated and complicated self-blaming narratives to account for the pain in their lives.

Of course, the way that contemporary social reality disrupts family life goes far beyond the impact of stress at work. In the fuller analysis that we presented at stress groups we discussed a variety of problems:

- the breakdown of neighborhoods and extended families and the nuclearization of family life;
- the decline of "communities of meaning" (including religious, political, and work communities) in which families used to be embedded, and the consequent burden put on "private life" to provide an alternative meaning or purpose for life;
- the fostering of narcissistic personality structures by a competitive marketplace that rewards most those people who know how to manipulate and control others —and the way these very behavior patterns that are most useful for success in the marketplace are most destructive to loving and trusting relationships in personal life;
- the triumph of "market" thinking in all spheres, leading to the creation of a marketplace of relationships, in which each person increasingly thinks of other people as though they too were commodities to be used and disposed of when no longer useful;
- the decline in values, particularly those of loyalty and responsibility to others, that goes hand in hand with the emergence of the self-interest ethos of the competitive marketplace;
- the role of sexism and inequalities of power between men and women in creating tensions that undermine loving commitments.

Ultimately, however, what we found most effective was the way participants were able to learn from one another's experiences. When asked to explore their own self-blame, working people often found ingenious ways to say, "Yes, but . . . " and then to fill in more detailed versions of how they *really were to blame* regardless of any social analyses that we could provide. But when they listened to *one another's* stories they could see how the other group members were unfairly blaming themselves—and it was *that* perspective that eventually made it possible for them to see how they were doing the same in their own case. (Moreover, listening to the tales of powerlessness and alienation at other work sites and other kinds of jobs sobered group participants—they realized that even different work paths might have been equally oppressive).

Understandably, once the dynamic of self-blame was uncovered and people began to disentangle the complex web of deception that had been woven around them, a new level of energy became apparent in the group. People were much more in touch with their anger, but also much less likely to direct this anger in ways that blamed people in their personal and family lives. They were more likely to feel angry at the larger social system in which they could increasingly see that not only they themselves but also their spouses and co-workers and even supervisors had been trapped. On the other hand, people also felt more interested in trying to join their fellow workers to try to change things in their work world. In personal life, most group members began to feel that they could talk with their spouses and friends about issues they had previously avoided, and soon began to report that they were getting greater support and care from people who had previously disappointed them. Most striking to us (and most troubling to some of the union bureaucrats), the people in the groups became active in their unions, sometimes challenging the established union leadership, and sometimes forming support groups with co-workers.

To be sure that we were not simply reading our personal expectations onto the workers, we devised a research project to evaluate how participants in the groups had changed (we used as a control workers who would have been interested in participation but for whom there had not been adequate space). Funded by

the National Institute of Mental Health, this research showed that as self-blame lessened group members were able to decrease their alcohol and drug consumption and increase their utilization of social support and their sense of power, on both an individual and collective basis. People developed a deep sense of compassion, first for themselves, but ultimately also for everyone else around them. As group members began to see in themselves and others the burdens and scars of self-blaming, they were able to identify with others more easily, including people who had previously seemed unattractive or even offensive. And, as we expected, the increased distance from self-blaming did not lead to an ethos of irresponsibility or passivity, as conservative theorists had warned. On the contrary, the less people felt bound to an irrational self-blaming, the more empowered they felt to take responsibility for the areas in their lives where they could potentially exercise power. People did not lapse into an indiscriminate blaming of those around them. In fact, irrational anger at others *decreased*—an indiscriminate "other-blaming," we discovered, is the flip side of self-blaming, and decreases with a decrease in irrational self-blaming. The energy freed up in this process went into cooperative work for social change.

Conservatives had claimed that it was the habit of blaming others that had, in the sixties, disempowered many in the "culture of poverty" by making them feel that they were merely victims. We found that fostering a careful rethinking of one's past and current situation, dismantling the punishing superego, and unfair self-blaming actually freed people from disabling depression and allowed them to take real responsibility for their lives.

Meanwhile, we had begun to realize that the social dimension of personal pain that we had discovered both in work and family life helped explain why so many working people had been attracted to the politics of the Right. By identifying itself as the "profamily force" and by talking about the pain in families, the Right had managed (inadvertently) to decrease self-blaming; it led people to believe that the problems they were facing in personal life were not merely a product of their own inner nature. The Right externalized the anger—in a totally unethical way—by scapegoating gays, the women's movement, Blacks, and the whole liberal and progressive movement (which they accused of having created an ethos of permissiveness and noncommitment that undermined loving families).

Liberals could have effectively counterattacked had they been willing to take up the argument and show that it was precisely the competitive marketplace—the very thing conservatives held most sacred—that had generated the decline in values, the decline in a sense of commitment to other people, and the disintegration of communities of meaning (because the only thing that *really* counts in the capitalist framework is money).

But liberals were unable to claim the issue because they were still so deeply involved in the struggle against the oppressive aspects of family life that they could not imagine being advocates *for* family. We proposed a progressive profamily movement aimed at raising these deeper issues of what was destroying family life. We hoped to foster a mass psychology of compassion around issues of work and family life—and a corresponding empowerment, which would replace self-blame with a deeper understanding of the sources of pain in personal life—in the same way that the women's movement had in effect helped women develop compassion for themselves in relation to sexist oppression. But the resistance we encountered was powerful.

To be "profamily" in the early and middle eighties was to be pro-Reagan, we were told over and over again by progressives and by theorists of the women's movement. Barbara Ehrenreich, writing in the *Nation* (March 13, 1982), argued that "most of the impulses that propel people toward the right-wing profamily movement are nasty ones: misogyny, racism, sexual repressiveness, and a punitive attitude toward young people." Rather than recognizing that people might be attracted to the Right by legitimate needs that the Left had failed to address, left critics dismissed the American majority as stupid, mesmerized by Reagan's media finesse, or racist. It was precisely this kind of elitist attitude that we were hoping to change when we put forward a deeper analysis of the pain in daily life that had attracted people to the Right. Instead, we were accused by progressives and feminists of covertly trying to sneak patriarchal ideology back into the liberal world. Though we insisted that we were talking about support for all kinds of families, includ-



ing gay and single-parent families, and that a central part of our analysis of what was undermining family life was the sexism and chauvinism of the larger society, we were nevertheless attacked and dismissed by the very liberal and progressive forces we thought should be listening.

Why should we have cared? After all, we were doing successful work on the local level—why not just be satisfied with that?

The problem was that we did not have a way of providing a larger context which could give support to graduates of our groups as they sought to live in a world without self-blame. Although many had experienced major transformations in consciousness, they often found it hard to live in accord with their new awareness. Just as women who had developed a feminist consciousness often had problems making sense of the lives they had formerly led, many of our group members found it difficult to fit into their daily lives now that they had a deeper understanding of what they were facing.

In the case of the women's movement, this tension was partly resolved by the very fact of there being a nationwide women's movement. However difficult things might be in one's own personal life, one could see oneself as part of a larger crusade to change the society, and thereby improve everyone's lot.

So we needed to create a larger social process, a mass psychology of compassion, so that changes in individuals could find sustenance in being part of a larger social transformation. Of course, in the process we would simultaneously be bringing healing and repair to a much larger group of people. This is very different from the medical model, in which the sickness is inside each person, and each can be cured through something that happens to her alone. We discovered that mental health for any given individual required mental health for much larger numbers of people—that the healing and repair of one person required healing and repair on the community and possibly even national level as well.

Yet unlike the women's movement we had no such larger context. The opinion leaders in health and in mental health, in unions and in government, in academia and in the media, in the women's movement and in the progressive social-change movements had little understanding of the need for a mass psychology of compassion, little sense of how such a mass psychology could be in *their* interests, and little openness to psychological thinking about social realities. Moreover, not a few were extremely hostile to this kind of thinking—in part because dealing with these questions forced them to think about the pain in their own lives—intellectuals and progressives had their own versions of self-blaming stories that they held onto with an intensity every bit as great as anyone else we had worked with.

So if we were to create a larger social movement for compassion, we needed to influence the opinion leaders and shapers, the activists and cadres, the people who might become involved in helping us take the model we had developed in California and bring it to the rest of the nation.

And that's when it became clear to us that a magazine of some sort would be the appropriate vehicle. We had watched how the American Right had managed to resurrect itself in the 1970s. Magazines such as *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* had played an important role then, providing the place in which many ideas could be developed, debated, and explored. Since we already had some practical experience to prove the validity of our perspective, why not create a context where we could similarly explore ideas that had sprung from the work of the Institute.

But here we ran into two difficulties. First, a magazine that was explicitly and solely committed to psychology would immediately marginalize itself, given the resistance to psychological thinking on the parts of many intellectuals, social-change activists, and policymakers. Second, a magazine that was too explicitly didactic would appear to be sectarian, and this would limit its audience.

So, we chose to build a magazine that would deal with a wide range of social, political, cultural, and philosophical issues—within that framework we could be *one* voice among many. Our goal, then, was not to create a vehicle for our ideas alone, but to create a much wider arena to which we would attract some of the most creative thinkers, writers, activists, and policymakers. In that arena we would put forward our own ideas as one of the various contenders. If our ideas made sense, they would find a responsive audience. We imagined that within ten years we would find a group of people who understood the importance of a mass psychology of compassion. That group could then play a significant role in taking the ideas that we had developed at the Institute (and that I had further developed in my book *Surplus Powerlessness*) and move forward to create a nationwide movement to address the problems of pain in family life and pain in the world of work. I continue to believe that the mass psychology of compassion is the most important strategy possible for healing, repairing, and transforming this society.

In *Tikkun* we began to test some of these ideas, refining their application in a variety of ways. We showed that the collapse of the social-change movements of the sixties was deeply connected with their

(continued on p. 93)

Not by Might and Not by Power: Kahanism and Orthodoxy

Chaim Seidler-Feller

Meir Kahane's assassination was abhorrent. But so were the reactions of some highly visible Jews. Only Leon Wieseltier got it right when he wrote in *The New Republic* that "Kahane's contribution was verbal and physical violence. This man only poisoned.... He did not save anybody from anything. He was directly responsible for the killing of innocent people. His killing was a repulsive act. But the Jewish community lost nothing."

It is incomprehensible that responsible individuals, including Seymour Reich of the Conference of Presidents, Abraham Foxman of the ADL, as well as a representative of the Israeli consulate (all three of whom attended Kahane's funeral) and Alan Dershowitz of Harvard, found it necessary to pay their respects to a man they claimed to loathe. Once again, American Jewish leaders and Israeli officials appeared unable to maintain a moral stance when confronted with populist chauvinism and an outcry for ethnic solidarity. They not only reduced Jewish moral capital, but also showed themselves to be not very different from the leaders of other ethnic communities and political bodies whom the Jewish establishment routinely condemns as weak-kneed and unprincipled.

Even more troubling, however, was the host of commentators who were careful to denounce Kahane's racism but who then credited him for important contributions to Jewish life and for the pointed questions that only he, putatively, dared to face squarely and directly. Such self-indulgent apologetics were reminiscent of the attempt by African-Americans to convince themselves that Farrakhan's anti-Semitism was but a minor—and exaggerated—component of a generally constructive social message. Indeed both men have shown a passion for hatred, a penchant for demagoguery. And both could deftly inflate their own group's pride at the expense of another group's honor. What apologists in both camps seem to ignore is the profoundly simple teaching that evil cannot be neatly set apart from any wider "social" message.

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, a member of the Tikkun *editorial board, has ministered to students and faculty at UCLA Hillel for the past fifteen years.*

Far more disturbing than the rationalizations of these revisionists is the way Kahane has been embraced as a Jewish hero by a large segment of the Orthodox community. The Orthodox rabbi of the Young Israel of Ocean Parkway, where Kahane's funeral was held, referred to him as a *tzaddik,* or saint. Rabbi Moshe Tendler, a prominent Yeshiva University talmudist and biologist, declared in his eulogy that "God spoke to Rabbi Kahane clearly," but that his "prophecy" had gone unheeded. The Orthodox Yeshiva of Flatbush where Kahane received his primary education saw fit to display its grief by placing an obituary for him in the *New York Times.* And among the thousands who attended his funeral, both in the U.S. and in Israel, the Orthodox formed an overwhelming majority. Of course, this is consistent with the preponderance of Orthodox Jews among Kahane's supporters and sympathizers. In other words, a key feature of Kahane's popularity, and one often overlooked in the discussions of the Kahane phenomenon, is the Orthodox connection.

What predisposes Orthodoxy to Kahanism? Why were so few prominent Orthodox rabbis willing to publicly condemn and ostracize him? Why, after all, is Orthodoxy amenable to a theology of vengeance and violence? Herein, we can only sketch tentative responses to such questions.

First, consider the demographic distinctiveness of the Orthodox community. Orthodox Jews tend to live in urban areas and, due to the rampant crime and threat of assault in inner-city neighborhoods, readily view themselves as victims in need of a champion. The Orthodox community was also devastated by the Holocaust. And many survivors, in the wake of the Holocaust, have identified themselves as Orthodox. This makes for a community with little or no trust in the "other." These survivors took to heart Kahane's message that "all goyim are out to get you" and "you can only rely on yourselves."

Second, one needs to take into account the psychological characteristics of Orthodox belief. Decades of public disparagement of Orthodoxy and predictions of its imminent demise have left Orthodox believers with a reservoir of smoldering anger toward other Jews and

the world at large. And due to their particular experience, Orthodox Jews have internalized the negative stereotype of Jews as totally powerless. Kahane exploited these feelings of shame and anger, and, since he spoke the language of Orthodoxy, was accepted as a savior who restored Jewish pride to the downtrodden Orthodox.

Finally, in matters of theological doctrine, Orthodoxy proved to be a congenial setting in which Kahane could lend religious credibility to his racism. Since Kahane consistently quoted biblical and rabbinic sources to bolster his arguments, Orthodox rabbis were reluctant to criticize him. For to do so would have meant admitting that some Jewish teachings are indeed racist, hateful, and immoral, and therefore must be reinterpreted—either changed or rejected. For some, this basic failure of theological nerve merged with a deeper feeling that Kahane had accurately pinpointed the primitive underbelly of Judaism; that his reading, based as it was on tradition, was actually correct.

And Orthodoxy has seized upon those elements of our tradition that lend themselves to such interpretations. The Book of Joshua and the commandment to conquer the land have invested traditional Judaism with a rationalized violent impulse. In fact the only manifestations of organized Jewish violence since the establishment of the state of Israel have come from within the ranks of Orthodoxy: I refer to the Shabbat stone-throwing practiced by ultra-Orthodox Jews; and to the Jewish underground *(mach teret)* that plotted to blow up the mosques atop the Temple Mount and murdered several Arab students in cold blood.

Moreover, the typical yeshiva curriculum has little to say to its students about ethical approaches to the non-Jew. When the question of other faiths is broached, it is usually only to demonstrate the superiority of Judaism and the vanity of any competing tradition. More often than not, yeshiva students are taught to regard other religions—particularly Christianity and Islam—with contempt. Under these circumstances the results of a recent survey of the attitudes of Israeli high school students toward Arabs are not at all astonishing: the data reveal that the level of intense hatred of Arabs is almost twice as great among religious students as among secular students.

These lessons are learned in the synagogue as well. Orthodox worshippers chant a memorial prayer almost every Shabbat that calls forth God's vengeance: "May our God remember them for good with the other righteous of the world, and render retribution for the blood of God's servants which has been shed." And many Orthodox children learn to sing the opening words of Psalm 94:1—"God of vengeance, Lord, God of vengeance, appear!"—to the tune of a rousing march. that the ease with which Orthodox Jews call for *nekama* (revenge) unconsciously primed them to respond to Kahane's vengeful anger? *Nekama* was forever on Kahane's lips, and he frequently led crowds in a *nekama* cheer. Kahane's funerals in Brooklyn and Jerusalem teemed with signs calling for revenge.

It is incomprehensible that Seymour Reich of the Conference of Presidents, Abraham Foxman of the ADL, and Alan Dershowitz of Harvard found it necessary to pay their respects to a man they claimed to loathe.

The changed complexion of world religion—notably the fundamentalist movement—has made Orthodoxy still more vulnerable to Kahane's message, producing a bitter backlash against modernity among Orthodox believers. One component of that fundamentalist revival is the emergence of an uncharacteristic literalism within the heart of rabbinic Judaism. The ability to formulate principles based on a literal reading of texts (both biblical and rabbinic) further bolstered ultra-nationalists, Kahane among them, with traditional proofs that substantiated their chauvinism. In addition, the growth of Orthodox fundamentalism aroused the already fervently nationalistic Orthodox masses to seek a messianic figure—or more correctly, an anti-messiah—whose divine pretensions ran contrary to the Torah-of-this-world and whose absolutism was, by definition, idolatrous. Here too, it comes as no surprise that Lubavitch, with its messianism, was consistently tolerant of Kahane, and that a lubavitcher rabbi from Los Angeles was among his eulogizers. Apparently one *avodah zarah* (idolatry) is comfortable with another.

For all these reasons, Orthodoxy has proven a fertile breeding ground for Kahanism. This partnership is especially destructive for Judaism, since Kahanism not only defiles the God who is the creator of humanity; it also undermines the basis of a Jewish religious humanism. Kahane's theology of vengeance has transformed the God of love and peace into a pagan god of hatred and war.

The death of Kahane will not stop this process. The challenge for all Jews is to reclaim their tradition and decisively uproot, once and for all, the Jewish teachings of contempt that have attracted so many followers to Kahane's message. □

Feminism: Still Hazy After All These Years

Felicia Kornbluh

On the face of things, feminists had good reason to cheer the outcome of the 1990 elections. Pro-choice candidates prevailed in key gubernatorial races in Texas and Florida, demonstrating that the fight for reproductive rights can deliver votes. This message was all the more powerful since it came at the level of state politics, the arena where more and more abortion battles will be fought in the wake of the Supreme Court's 1989 *Webster* ruling.

But recent events have given feminists concerned with issues beyond the defense of *Roe v. Wade* little reason to rejoice. Long before the polls had opened, the 101st Congress delivered bracing defeats to other vital feminist causes. Congress failed to override President Bush's veto of the Family and Medical Act, even though the legislation's provisions for *unpaid* leaves for a small minority of the work force were timid indeed by the standards of most industrial nations. Congress also failed to override Bush's veto of the 1990 Civil Rights Act, which would have brought claims of sexual discrimination under the protection of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. And, even while it negotiated successful passage of the first comprehensive child care legislation since World War II, Congress still came nowhere near to meeting the actual need for services.

Feminist silence in the face of these grave issues was as disquieting as recent mobilizations on behalf of reproductive rights were impressive. In fact, the apparent unity of feminists on the issue of legal abortion obscures as much as it reveals about the state of feminist politics. Beneath this surface consensus lies a host of troubling questions of fundamental political direction that were raised, but never resolved, throughout the embattled 1980s.

These questions have largely dropped out of mainstream feminist debate. But they present themselves with growing urgency to young feminists seeking to define a new politics for our generation. For now, this struggle gets addressed chiefly in a forum all too characteristic of left politics today—the introspective conference. Recently I attended one such conference organized by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C. It was intended to inaugurate a "Young Women's Project" of the Institute, and to afford a chance for feminists under thirty to meet and discover something a pamphlet-writer called our "collective voice."

In fairness, finding such a common pitch is notoriously difficult. And as a measure of the vital signs of 1990s feminism, the gathering was half-successful—and more than half-surprising. Many young women did, indeed, meet for the day. We found that many of us were working hard, doing interesting things, and identifying ourselves in some way with some version of the feminist movement. There were young women from *off our backs,* a Washington-based radical feminist paper founded in 1970; young women lobbyists; labor organizers; advocates for improved birth-control technology and reproductive choice; campus activists; lesbian and gay rights advocates; women from Catholics for Choice; and many others. Most of us were white, but a substantial minority were not. Many of us worked in Washington, but many worked in communities scattered throughout the country. Still, we didn't articulate anything in what I'd call a "collective voice." It seemed clear that, while we had a lot of disparate ideas and causes, we didn't stand on common ground. What's more, aside from the Young Women's Project itself, few of us represented new organizations or ideas. Significantly, most of the day's speakers were older women, in at least their thirties or forties, who came to politics at a different time than my own generation of feminists did.

But before we can see just how significant such demographic details are, perhaps an introduction is in order. I am a twenty-four-year-old left feminist, raised on the liberal side of the tracks. I grew up with big ideas, high aspirations, and a lot of other people's memories. My first tremors of political awakening came with the 1972 elections, the *Roe v. Wade* decision, and the long-deferred end of the U.S. war in Vietnam. I learned in grade school that Black was Beautiful and men and women were Free to be You and Me. My first memory of getting something wrong in school (and therefore my first palpable record of shame) is of misinterpreting the lyrics to "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" before a paraprofessional teacher with a folk guitar. Even while many of the people around me denigrated the radical "excesses" of the Left, the politics in which

Felicia Kornbluh is a research scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies and the Wolfson Center on Public Policy.

I was schooled from my earliest days were antiwar and pro-woman, deeply suspicious of the status quo.

Women like me are forced to confront, almost as a matter of course, the legacy of the recent past, and the terrible sense of inadequacy that it gives us about our own work. Somehow, I have always understood that "the sixties," although not long past, were a special time in U.S. political history. They became the special reference point against which all my efforts—liberal, left, feminist—would be judged. Although my parents and their friends were hardly "sixties people," believing more in the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Democratic Party than in consciousness-raising and demonstrations, they too were occasionally bathed in the era's lava-lamp glow of infinite possibility. It is not, and never has been, an easy legacy to live with. The Ghost of Politics Past has whispered in my ear in every political debate I remember having and has chuckled heartlessly at every naive, self-justifying, or half-informed proclamation of faith that I have hazarded.

By ceding the territory of "the family" to the Right, we not only missed an opportunity to expand, but allowed feminism itself to take much of the heat for the family's supposed "breakdown."

But we are not merely burdened with an obsessively eulogized activist legacy; that legacy is itself deeply divided. Women of my generation must address the suggestion that many of the wounds U.S. feminists have suffered have been largely self-inflicted. A variety of sources argue, with powerful evidence, that both radical and liberal feminists have failed to organize across lines of class, race, and (at least initially) sexual orientation. These charges are evidence of, and have themselves produced, several splits in recent feminist thinking. One group of critics, following the logic of social-democratic politics, indicts the narrowness of feminist organizations and the substance of feminist agendas; another seeks to address a wide range of "differences" that feminists have not yet learned to deal with. The first critique points to public politics, and the failure of feminists to mount a majoritarian, inclusive campaign to speak to most women's basic material needs; the second points to personal exploration as a path to an enlarged social vision. Although the two positions are sometimes grouped together, in fact they derive from very different understandings of women's oppression. And both positions propose remedies that are as divergent as day and night. Feminists who have taken it upon themselves to address the personal sensitivities of individual activists, or of feminist organizations, seem to move ever further away from addressing women's needs for jobs, adequate wages, child care, parental leave, health care, and other bulwarks of a social-democratic system.

As young feminists facing the future we cannot overestimate the power of the first position. After two decades of work by our predecessors, the question remains, what do most women stand to gain from joining a feminist movement? If we have learned nothing else from the experience of losing the ERA and almost losing the right to reproductive choice, we have learned that *not* appealing to most middle- and working-class women can be deadly to our efforts. In fact, appealing to the majority of women may require a radical redefinition of these efforts—and a radical change in the terms we use to discuss them. Aside from the mobilization in response to the *Webster* decision, the strongest recent instances of women's organizing at the grassroots have been on the Right. Phyllis Schlafly's "Stop ERA" campaign and the current "right-to-life" movement may receive funding from national right-wing groups and churches, but they are mostly staffed and sustained by middle- and working-class women. Both groups draw their strength from intense class antagonism, and from a perception that feminism exists primarily for the wealthy. Unfortunately, that perception is not all wrong.

One key to overcoming it is to develop cogent work and family policies—and to make them central to our agenda. Some of the strongest calls for such reforms come from an increasingly vocal group of critics within feminist ranks. Betty Friedan criticizes the "feminist denial of the importance of family" and economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett accuses U.S. feminists of all but dismissing "the most widely shared experience of women (after sex), motherhood." Political theorist Zillah Eisenstein contends that arriving at "a policy for the family or for different forms of the family [was] as central to the politics of the 1980s as finding a remedy to inflation."

Although writing from different perspectives, and with different political objectives, all of these women observed—and the entire generation that came of age during the 1980s could not help observing as well—that the right wing succeeded where feminists failed. The Right has been able, however disingenuously, to capitalize on women's anxieties over their twin identities as workers and family members. And by ceding the territory of "the family" to the Right, we not only missed an opportunity to expand, but allowed feminism itself to take much of the heat for the family's supposed

"breakdown." We never needed to relinquish this ground, and yet we continue to do so—and arguably with greater haste than ever.

Answering the right-wing charge, and re-entering public politics with an agenda broader than the defense of abortion rights requires what Friedan calls a "second stage" of activism—meaning that we can forget about power-conflict between genders, renounce struggles in the kitchen and the bedroom, and join with men to pursue a wider, more humanistic social vision. Taking Friedan's logic a bit further, Mary Ann Mason argues in *The Equality Trap* that we should recognize that "society has a strong and legitimate interest in actively promoting the nuclear family. . . ."

But these kind of revisionist extremes hardly seem necessary. There is no inherent contradiction between a gender-based politics, aware of the inegalitarian structure of the nuclear family, and a politics that supports women in their daily roles as workers and mothers. We need instead a second stage that supports women's work and mothering on feminist grounds, that views both roles as essential to material survival. This dual agenda would address both the liberal feminist goal of gender equality and the radical one of women's liberation. Social-democratic state policies are not the endpoint of feminist social reconstruction. But they are its sine qua non. What is more supportive of women's equality than affordable and accessible child-care? What could be more liberating for a woman than a life-sustaining wage? And, conversely, what good is consciousness-raising—indeed, how possible is it—if you can't get a sitter Tuesday night? Someday we will deal with the challenges posed by more ambitious theoretical and ideological critiques of patriarchy and its cultural consequences. Today we have no choice but to join with Representatives Patricia Schroeder and Marian Wright Edelman, the respective chief sponsors of the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Act for Better Child Care.

The second key to reforming and broadening feminist politics in the 1990s is reworking the terms of our support for abortion rights. While we may not be able to "convert" women who are "pro-life," we can express our support for fertility control in ways that are less offensive to many middle- and working-class women. Social scientists Kristin Luker and Faye Ginsburg have both argued recently that differences between "pro-life" and "pro-choice" women correspond to their differing attitudes toward wage-work—that is to say, their class status and age. Continued access to abortion is an indispensable option for a professional woman, who must control her fertility carefully during long periods of training and while at the lower rungs of a career ladder. It is somewhat less important to a woman who does not expect to work in the laborforce, or who has little chance to move up economically. Childbearing for this woman—assuming she is able to afford it—is, at any time of life, of approximately equal value. What's more, as Deidre English writes, "legitimately enough, [the anti-choice woman] has her own self-interest in mind, in a world in which she did not create the options." Women who married when the marriage contract stood for a trade of sexual access for economic sustenance have seen the rules change mid-game: more reliable birth control and legal abortion diminish the premium on sex and, thus loosen the imperative to marry. For women who have always expected to work for wages, and/or who are able to get goodpaying jobs, the old sexual contract is not mourned. But for women who married decades ago, or who can't get jobs that pay even as well as their husbands' would have in the 1950s, the much-vaunted results of the women's movement—sexual freedom, backed up by abortion, and the social expectation that women will work for money—have been about as liberating as a lead kite.

The best cure for the antagonism between "pro-choice" and "pro-life" women, which is grounded in material fact, is a feminism that addresses women's economic needs, including the economic need for abortion as back-up birth control. Sixty-five percent of minimum-wage workers are women. In 1987, the median salary for a woman employed full-time was $16,909—little better than the poverty line for a small family. "Choice" is no answer to these problems; class-sensitive politics that include the abortion option come a lot closer. There are a few ways we can talk about abortion in broader terms. One is to connect abortion to the family agenda. As Friedan writes, the feminist charge is to allow people the choice not to have children—but also the wherewithal *to* have them, if and when they choose to do so (and 90 percent of women still do). This approach promises hope for the future as well as dead fetuses and tough choices in the present. A second option is to connect birth control and abortion to the more widely accepted call for publicly sponsored health care. Third is an even more direct economic strategy, presenting abortion in the way many women seem to see it—not as a moral absolute but as a necessity in context. When giving birth to a child conflicts with other economic, familial responsibilities—feeding the other kids, working for decent money, or finishing school—abortion is is a necessary evil, if not a social good. But the burdens imposed by hard work and no state services make abortion indispensable. Women should be able to organize against these burdens more than they organize against each other's view of abortion as a moral absolute.

Young feminists have to take the social democratic challenge especially seriously because some of our feminist predecessors have not. Reviewing Hewlett's book, *A Lesser Life,* for *Ms.* magazine, which she now edits, Robin Morgan complained that it contained "tediously familiar right-wing anti-feminist accusations concluding, in this case, with radical-chic leftist solutions." Morgan maintained that women's stake in economic issues is "inextricably intertwined with issues of race, class, sexual preference, age, ethnic background, marital status, educational access, technology access, welfare rights, ad infinitum." Well ... sure. But Hewlett has merely argued that we have to start somewhere. Class is not merely one item on a laundry list of social quirks or competing claims to the status of oppression; material deprivation is not just one of a litany of political concerns. Hewlett and other social democratic thinkers look to trade unionism to bring matters of material interest to the top of the feminist agenda. Surely trade unions are no cure-all (though neither are they "chic"). But, unlike the U.S. feminist movement, unions in this country and elsewhere in the industrialized West do have a track record of delivering improvements in the material standard of living to their members. That matters.

Morgan's political point of view, and her hostility to the "patriarchal" Left, typify the "cultural" feminist position that seeks to unify women by celebrating multiple lines of "difference"—but believing at the same time that women are all the same under the skin. In *Daring to Be Bad,* her ambitious history of radical feminism, historian Alice Echols argues that the movement fell to pieces in the mid seventies because this "cultural" strain—which has its seeds in earlier radical feminism—came to predominate. Cultural feminism largely denies that differences between men and women are based on power relations. It tends to regard such differences as essential. At its worst, cultural feminism treats women as a single, isolated nation or subculture, with their own history and mores, content with capitalism, and beset with only psychological problems and those created by maleness. "Thus," writes Echols, "the goal of feminism becomes the development of an alternative consciousness or what Mary Daly terms the 'spring into free space.'"

Meanwhile, feminist political debate continues to be fertile breeding ground for variant strains of what might be called the "difference disease," the cultural-feminist tendency to see all oppressions as equal but curable in the warm lap of the eternal Mother. The Young Women's Project conference proved an especially vulnerable host organization. We were lectured from the podium by a young Republican woman who serves in the South Carolina State Legislature. She was pro-choice, but she had also worked for Senator Strom Thurmond, an arch-conservative tribune of "family values." Do we really need to include such women in our coalition—and if we decide to include her, whom do we leave out? We heard from a Jewish lesbian from the American Association of University Women and a black woman from the Junior League, who implored us to remember that even rich, conservative women's institutions can be transformed from within. And we suffered through workshops on "prejudice reduction," in which we were invited to share our "true," if repressed, biases about other colors and kinds of people. I did not feel transformed by the experience, but did feel rather put on the spot, having to dredge up predictably prejudicial mental "associations" with, for example, the words "black" and "African-American." With some cause, given the history of exclusion and partiality in the U.S. women's movement, feminist organizers today walk on eggshells. In pursuit of an elusive "difference [that is] simultaneous rather than a basis for hierarchical opposition," in the words of one feminist comrade, we are resistant to the point of incapacity when it comes to positing a program. Loose inclusiveness and pseudo-sensitivity may make for pleasant con-

(continued on p. 94)

MEANINGS OF THE HOLOCAUST

THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

edited by Roger S. Gottlieb

Thinking the Unthinkable is an anthology of twenty-six essays by such leading Holocaust commentators as Elie Wiesel, Emil Fackenheim, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Bruno Bettelheim, and Abraham Heschel. The contributors represent an impressive cross-section of viewpoints—religious and secular, Jewish and non-Jewish, male and female, conservative and liberal.

"This book assembles some of the most important thinking of the past several decades on the Holocaust. It is deep, stimulating, challenging and intelligent. Thinking the Unthinkable *forces the reader to go beyond the 'received wisdom' to look at the underlying issues that are often ignored in Holocaust literature."*
Michael Lerner, Ph.D.
editor of TIKKUN

Roger S. Gottlieb is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Paper $14.95

PAULIST PRESS
997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, N.J. 07430
1-201-825-7300

Agnon and Ecstasy

Evan Zimroth

Shira by S. Y. Agnon, translated by Zeva Shapiro. Schocken, 1989, 585 pp.

Filled with taboo sexuality and more scarred by leprosy than anything this side of Leviticus, *Shira* may be the book that rescues S. Y. Agnon from his charmed literary ghetto. This obsessive novel about obsession, torn between its Jewish roots and Western experimentalism, situates Agnon in the modernist tradition of James Joyce, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Donald Barthelme. Unfinished and perverse, it also highlights the odd fact that to date Agnon's genius seems to have been recognized only in an insular Jewish literary community.

In a lovely essay on Agnon in *Israel and the Dead Sea Scrolls,* Edmund Wilson, utterly baffled that a novel might show nothing of "the religion of the Gentiles," called Agnon's work "a monument to a culture that has lost much of its reality." That is, a monument to a ghetto culture of deep piety, poetry, and irony. And it's quite true that Agnon flourishes within the Jewish literary world of Talmud and midrash, and that some of his fictions have the patina of Jewish antiquity. Even with the perversities of *Shira,* Agnon will retain his position as patron saint of Israeli fiction, noted for his piety and creative reverence for Jewish sources and texts.

But the challenge for Agnon readers today—so it seems to me—is to rescue him from the cloisters of the Galician ghetto, to read him side by side with other contemporary writers. Rather than rehashing the antique Agnon or the talmudic Agnon, I will risk the modernist Agnon, perverse master (or victim) of the obsessive text. Better a de Sadean fiction of leper colonies than a monument to lost culture.

Western literary resources for Hebrew fiction are only now beginning to be fully explored. It is as if the dominant Western literary tradition is drawn upon only when all else fails, when the material is so intractable that traditional Jewish texts seem inadequate. The Holocaust, of course, is the most dramatic example of how an impossible subject provides an opportunity for startling originality. It is David Grossman's brilliance in *See Under: Love* to write a comic Holocaust novel, exploring its effects on the second generation, by turning to such influences as James Joyce and kids' adventure stories. With his dazzling stream-of-consciousness narrative, his montage, lists, and encyclopedia entries, Grossman catapults Israeli fiction into stardom. *See Under: Love* is the literary equivalent of winning the Six Day War.

But it is Agnon who paved the way. His bizarre erotica, what Israeli critic Gershon Shaked called his "decoherent structures," his lengthy digressions and alternative endings, give *Shira* the density and pattern of a major modern novel. The painfully prolonged composition of this novel also testifies to Agnon's ambition —to portray an urbane character driven and undone by the conflicting claims of moderation and deviance. Agnon was courageous to ensure publication of *Shira* in its peculiar and flawed state. In *Shira* he exposes, publicly and in literary form, what he also took pains to deny—a sensibility bound not only to ancient Jewish sources but also to Western experimentalism.

Obsession in its modernist form, Roland Barthes suggests in his study of de Sade, takes perverse pleasure in classification, and nurtures a corresponding mania for cut-up bodies. Along with a lust for sickness and for the taboo, exactly such obsession lies at the heart of *Shira*. The novel is neither antique nor charming.

Shira has no plot: it is a six-hundred-page meditation on adultery. A novel only in the sense that de Sade's *Justine* is, it is impelled forward only by its underlying deviance. It contains foot fetishism, whips, rape, mutilation, and murder; and, like much of Agnon's earlier work, it tolls with an obsession for deviant women. The novel's main character, Manfred Herbst, is a German immigrant to Mandate Palestine, a man of impeccable scholarship who throughout the novel continually and pathetically fails to write his planned second book on ancient Byzantine burial customs. At the very moment that his beloved wife is giving birth to their third daughter, Herbst encounters a woman in a Jerusalem phone

Evan Zimroth is a poet who teaches at Queens College, City University of New York.

booth. He is utterly overcome by Shira in one moment and the bond formed between them is unremitting. Herbst returns with Shira to her apartment where he embarks upon an adulterous affair of no redeeming beauty but full of the unfathomable allure of deviance.

However, lest you rush out to see if the book is yet in paperback (it isn't), please know that reading it is a bit like watching syrup move across a floor. The novel's pedantic pace seems the mirror of Herbst's desire to catalogue and classify in his increasingly desiccated scholarship, and the deep harmonies of his long, boring marriage—rendered in all its loving inanity—do not exactly make for fictive fireworks. (I am grateful for Zeva Shapiro's bare-bones translation, which appropriately sacrifices the drama and grace of a Hillel Halkin translation for an awkwardness more in keeping with the novel's evident discords.)

Moreover, *Shira* showcases all the impediments to plot a wily novelist can devise. These digressions have an obsessive life of their own, sometimes becoming so mesmerizing that they even overwhelm Agnon's preoccupation with sexuality. Most revolve around two special love affairs—the author's love affair with the city of Jerusalem, and a scholar's love affair with his books. Although Shira herself is the primary object of sexual fascination, such lavish attention is paid to both city and library that these, also, become objects of obsession, of sexual energy. The account of Jerusalem in the thirties as it begins to overflow with German refugees from Hitler is filled with realistic detail because Herbst, in his compulsion to classify, turns the city into a grid he's compelled to trace and retrace. As for the scholarly love affair with books, it becomes part of what might be called the social fabric of the novel. Much of the discussion of books has to do with the valuable libraries jettisoned by once-wealthy Germans as they try to adjust to their new (and resented) lives in Palestine. But books themselves in *Shira* are also objects of fetishism, erotic talismans. After Herbst loses Shira, fingering a rare book makes him tremble. (Alan Mintz, in *Commentary,* points out the novel's "bibliomania and bibliophilia.") Herbst is unhinged as much by wandering over Jerusalem and by his lust for books as he is by Shira, who reverberates through his memory and fantasy.

Books and stories also function as zones of private obsessions. Many of Agnon's fictions focus on a woman who is both storyteller and deviant, eccentric and possessed even if devotional. But unlike Agnon's usual pious storytellers, who seek only talmudic or Chasidic lore, Shira tells stories that are secular, perverse, and erotic. To Herbst, her autobiographical tales are heart-stoppingly brutal, leaving them both confused and shattered. Shira draws Herbst in by revealing her own obsessions. She introduces this modest, passive German historian to the strange and confusing pleasures of sadomasochism by asking him, "Tell me, my friend, are you not capable of beating a woman?" And when Herbst cries out "No!" he realizes "he was on the verge of slapping her face." Reacting sadistically to Herbst's helplessness, Shira goes on to tell him, in obsessive detail, of her encounter with an engineer who whipped her. In all of these story-telling episodes, Shira cuts off her story, and forbids Herbst to ask questions. His own masochism impels the story-telling: he wants to hear more and then cannot bear it; his curiosity is abused. The stories leave both of them raw, vulnerable, and in bondage to each other, with Herbst demoralized by his own fascination, as if an abyss were opening up before him. Shira covers his eyes afterwards and falls exhausted into his arms as if to tell him that he both should and should not be listening, that she exposes herself only at great cost. Her storytelling is the only lovemaking Agnon allows us to witness.

Agnon's odd genius in this novel is to show how, in an instant, a life can move from the placid to the demonic. Shira's allure increases the more she becomes diseased. Her freckled face foreshadows leprosy; as she sickens and gradually removes herself from human contact, Herbst's obsession for her grows. Where once Herbst had no trouble realizing "how good it was for a man to be faithful to his wife," he now is grateful for every moment that the memory of Shira does not torment him. He repeatedly falls into reveries, erotic fantasies, and nightmares in which he finds severed legs, he is accused of murder, or Shira herself is revealed as rapist and murderer. In another fantasy, Shira is raped and murdered by Arabs, until "all that remained of her was two legs ... the legs [Herbst] first saw that night when he went home with her and sat with her while she put on the dark blue slacks." He abandons his scholarship to write a tragedy, in German rhymed verse, of a slave, hopelessly enraptured by a queen, who is banished to a leper colony. Fortunately for German poetry, Herbst fails at this as well, and is left to his obsessions.

His "lurid fantasies" do not vanish, nor does Herbst's nocturnal pattern of trying to hunt Shira down by obsessively returning to her abandoned apartment. In a too-neat repetition of the plot, Herbst tracks down Shira's address at the very moment that his wife is having another baby. "He suddenly realized how bizarre it was, how ugly it was: a man's wife is about to bear his child, and he is groveling at another woman's door." He returns repeatedly to the empty apartment, never finding Shira in; he experiences a hopeless welter of emotions: "Herbst walked the alley from beginning to end again. He repeated this course three or four times.

Whenever he came close to her house, he hoped he would and wouldn't find her door open. He circled so many times that he began to feel dizzy."

Shira rounds out Agnon's comprehensive study of obsession. The weird novella *Edo and Enam* (1954) draws on both Zohar and the travels of the twelfth-century Benjamin of Tudela to tell the story of a linguistics scholar's passion for a married woman who sleepwalks at full moon and sings in an unknowable tongue. The short story "Forevermore," originally part of *Shira* but extracted and published separately in 1954, describes a similar predicament—its main character, obsessed by an ancient text, gives up all pretense of normalcy and fatally cloisters himself in a leper colony. Finally, in the novel Agnon wrote right before *Shira*—*A Simple Story,* published in 1935 in Hebrew, in 1985 in English—the "hero" falls in love with a manifestly unsuitable servant-girl, but is married off to a woman of his own class. This hero becomes, like Herbst, a nocturnal rambler, obsessively returning to the servant-girl but unable to make contact with her.

Agnon fails to find an adequate fictional ending for *A Simple Story.* But rather than tantalize us with modernist devices, Agnon makes the hero break down. He is carted off to a sanitarium where he is greeted by a *deus ex machina*—a psychologist who magically cures him of his unwanted sexual obsession. With *Shira,* however, the breakdown is in the novel itself.

If Agnon were a more unqualified modernist, we would understand the two alternate endings he affixed to the novel as a device to mock the reader's desire for closure. In one, he confesses his adultery to his forgiving wife and all is absolved; in the other he pledges himself to the diseased but still compelling Shira in a leper colony, trying to join her in the holy state of leprosy. Each more absurd than the other, the two possibilities move *Shira* beyond nineteenth-century categories of realism and verisimilitude toward a fiction of constantly shifting planes. But Agnon is not entirely a modernist writer. Rather, his fictions move from their seemingly realist moorings toward the self-conscious and the obsessive, always threatening to veer out of control. The naming of his heroine is another example of Agnon's risky steps toward disintegration. Initially, the book's narrator is not sure whether to call her Shira or Nadia: "Nadia, i.e., Shira, i.e., Nadia opened a pack of cigarettes." Shira, in Hebrew, (of course) means poetry, song, but Nadia, despite its Russian sound, also suggests *nada,* nothingness. This alternate naming is clumsy but it alerts the reader early on to the novel's problematic turns of narrative. When Shira—whose poetry only Herbst hears—evaporates, the novel does come precariously close to *nada.*

Like much of modernist literature, the narrative of *Shira* is fractured, veering from nineteenth-century realism on the grand scale to anatomies of privacy and deviance. While his usual literary resources of Bible, midrash, and Kabbala are little used in this novel, he does appropriately draw upon Leviticus, with its obsessive attention to the details of leprosy. The concern in Leviticus for diagnosis and quarantine might have suggested to Agnon that he excise Shira from the community of the novel; Leviticus is also a model for the pornographic tone, the thrill to violence and the fascination with disfigurement and disease.

Herbst repeatedly falls into reveries, erotic fantasies, and nightmares in which he finds severed legs, he is accused of murder, or Shira herself is revealed as rapist and murderer.

But Agnon might also have found helpful models for his fictions in a source he largely ignores. Joyce's *Ulysses* renders the everyday of Dublin as scrupulously as *Shira* does Jerusalem. *Ulysses,* too, has a rambling hero galvanized by erotic desire but still jostled about by the quotidian. Leopold Bloom and Manfred Herbst share a sexual fascination with a woman who abuses them. I tend to think that Agnon's secret reading, like Joyce's, must have been that German classic of sadomasochism, *Venus in Furs.* But while Joyce pioneered stream-of-consciousness narration, and cannibalized such sources as Greek drama and Christian philosophy (not to mention arcane pornography), Agnon seems to have reached a literary impasse, and thus we have the dilemma of *Shira,* one that can be solved only by leprosy. It is as if Molly Bloom had AIDS.

Leprosy—the brutality of it—is stunningly apt for Agnon's last novel. It has the archaic power to shock, as much today as for the community endangered in Leviticus. Hearkening back to the Levitical problem of how to protect a fragile communal structure from disease, the image of leprosy in *Shira* suggests as well something thoroughly contemporary—the fascination with the taboo and forbidden. Leprosy may be a medical anachronism, but contagion is not, nor is adultery and the obsession it inspires. Leprosy, with its power to invade and violate, its power to isolate the individual from the communal structures he holds most dear, in *Shira* is the brilliant analogue to adultery. Agnon reaches in two directions—toward the ancient power of his Jewish sources, and toward a modernist anatomy of an individual beset and captivated by disease. □

Midrashim on Proverbs: A Sequence

David Curzon

I

[Proverbs 3:1–3]

My son, forget not my teaching; But let thy heart keep my commandments; 2 For length of days, and years of life, And peace, will they add to thee. 3 Let not kindness and truth forsake thee; Bind them about thy neck, Write them upon the table of thy heart.

[Translation: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917]

Proverbs 3:1

My son, forget not my teaching—recall
our conversation on the word "sadism," when I
maintained the main medical definition
was pain inflicted while making love
and how you insisted (as if important
to you at fourteen!) the meaning was broader;
and recall my advice to forego your affection
for physics and become a physician so that
if you failed at research you could have a recourse;
and recall that I never remarried and lived alone,
and recall your visits to my sparse rented
furnished rooms, our common silence
filled in with games of chess, and recall
coming into the kitchen in your mother's house
to be told I was dead and how it happened
and the hours over years of meditation on
your part in the silence that led to suicide—

and let your heart keep my commandments.

II

[Proverbs 15:16–17 and 17:1]

16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it. 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it. . . .
Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.

[Translation: King James Version]

Proverbs 17:1

Better is a dry morsel with quiet
and key turning in a front lock,
a door that opens on empty rooms,
a lonely mouth watering at the thought
of a kiss as it reads a trashy romance,
and a death undiscovered for several days,
and a funeral to which few come,

than a house full of feasting with strife.

III

[Proverbs 8:1]

Doth not wisdom call, And understanding put forth her voice?

[Translation: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917]

Proverbs 8:1

Doth not wisdom call
in hunger, in yearning,

and understanding put forth her voice
in a gasp, a quick laugh?

IV

[Proverbs 15:23]

23 A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth; And a word in due season, how good is it!

[Translation: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917]

Proverbs 15:23

Winter. Fifth Avenue. Half a block south
of Central Park. It blurted out. Ten years ago.
"You're as lovely as the falling snow."

A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth
And you were startled by what you understood.
And, spoken in their moment, words are good.

Tradition Unbound: Poetry from Midrash

David Curzon

Twenty-five years ago I was in an ashram on the banks of the Ganges; ten years later, in New York, after a great deal of meditation, I came to understand that, profound and attractive as Indian religions and philosophies were, I was, in fact, not Hindu.

But I was my psychological self and dreamed my own dreams and made a mess of life in my own way. I became preoccupied with all this until, after a great deal of analysis, and another ten years, I came to understand that the self was circumscribed.

I needed some way of discovering my experiences, and moving beyond them, that was not directly based on my own life. Could it be that the religious texts of my childhood might provide a source of inspiration, and a broad common ground with others? After avoiding them for twenty years, I gradually and reluctantly started studying the Bible and its commentaries, by trying to write poems based on my reading.

The first strategy I adopted was to reject all that could not be immediately read by nonbelievers such as myself as parables. I did not want to violate my sense of integrity and this required, so I thought, not writing any sentence that implied my belief in things beyond the truths of my secular understanding of the world. With the aid of this strategy I reduced 3,000 years and 100,000 pages of erudition, imagination, and wisdom to nothing.

I then decided to preserve my integrity by the opposite strategy of searching for stories and commentaries that were so at variance with secular understanding that no one could ever mistakenly assume I believed in them. For example, Exodus 19:17 tells us:

> Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

The King James translation I am quoting here has found a brilliant solution to a peculiarity in the Hebrew. All recent translations, including the Jewish Publication Society's version, have the people being brought, sensibly enough, to the "foot" or "base" of Mount Sinai. But the Hebrew has them standing *b'tachteet* of the mountain. This could mean "at the nether world" as well as "at the lower part." The rabbis of course noticed this ambiguity and came up with an explanation in the form of a hitherto-unknown incident. The Soncino Chumash has Rashi attributing the story to "tradition." It appears (in more than one place) in the Talmud; Abodah Zarah 2b recounts it as follows:

> In commenting on the verse: "And they stood at the nether part of the mountain," R. Dimi b. Hama said: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, suspended the mountain over Israel like a vault [lit., "cask," "tub"] and said to them: 'If you accept the Torah, it will be well with you; if not, here will be your grave.'

The recent translations of the Bible destroy the textual basis of this legend and are consequently poorer translations than the King James Version. In any case, when I came across this passage while rummaging in the Talmud I thought to myself, "How wonderful; this is my sort of madness." And so:

The Talmud on Free Will

When Moses brought the people from their camp
toward Mount Sinai, where they'd meet with God,
they stood (I quote) "at the nether part of the mount."
But why this strange locution, "nether part"?
It is, says Rabbi Dimi (the son of Hama,
the Babylonian sage) to teach us that
the Holy One lifted the mountain up
(like a huge tub) and held it over them
so all were under the vastness of its base
which blotted out the sun and was, when they
looked up, the only thing they saw. And then,
silenced in its shadow, they all shook
with the reverberations of the voice,
which, we are told, even the deaf could hear,
when God opened his mouth and spoke these words:

(continued on p. 95)

David Curzon lives in New York and works at the United Nations. *This article will be the Preface to his forthcoming book of poems,* Midrashim, *which will be chapbook No. 5 in the Jewish Writers Series published by Cross Cultural Communications (forthcoming in February 1991). "Psalm 1" was first published in* Tikkun; *"The Talmud on Free Will" and "Proverbs 6:6" were first published in* Forward.

Voices From Israel

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent public statements by many prominent Palestinians in support of Hussein caused a crisis in the Israeli peace movement, particularly among those who had been involved in creating face-to-face dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. As the peace movement sought to regroup, new incidents further complicated the picture. The Temple Mount massacre—in which at least nineteen Palestinians were killed and several hundred more reported wounded—was followed by the Israeli government's refusal to meet with the United Nations investigating team; a Shamir-appointed commission's investigation paid no attention to the Palestinian perspective on the massacre. Following Palestinian calls for revenge, three Jews were stabbed to death in Baka, a quiet residential section of Jerusalem that had been a center of Peace Now activities. The Israeli government responded by closing the borders of the Occupied Territories—thereby prohibiting any Palestinians from entering Israel for the next six days. Paradoxically, in so doing Shamir's right-wing government seemed to be recognizing the fundamental difference between the pre-1967 Israel and "Greater Israel." Some doves thought that this acknowledgment of physical separation signaled an opportune moment to press the case for a separate Palestinian state. Others feared that doing so would only lead to a new arrangement—modeled on the South African "homelands"—whereby Palestinians would be denied real self-determination. We present below some of the discussion taking place in the aftermath of these events.

Aaron Back

Jerusalem—Fall 1990

1. Friday, in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Baka, there are no braided challot for sale at the corner bakery. On the shelves I see only the round ones, the kind baked on holidays. Earlier in the week, a block away, three neighbors were stabbed to death by a single Palestinian. For the next few days all Palestinians are barred from entering Jerusalem. Only they know how to bake the braided challot.

2. In a ground-floor apartment in Baka, a family prepares for the funeral of their son-in-law, murdered outside their door earlier that morning. In the apartment above them another family, prominent peace activists, sit with shutters drawn as cries of "kill the leftists" rise up from the street. A neighbor tries to quiet the crowd, her voice overpowered by the man standing next to her. He yells, "You have no right to speak here, you're a guest in the neighborhood." She has lived in Baka for twenty-two years. He has lived there for thirty. Behind them stands an Arab house. Its original occupants fled in 1948 and are not present to offer their case for seniority in the neighborhood.

3. Hours after the Baka killings, I receive a call from our landlady, a woman we barely know. She tells me that she has just heard the news on the radio, and is calling to find out if we are safe. At times of national tragedy, she, like most Israelis, displays a concern that reflects the best ideals of a caring community. A week later, life has returned to normal, and she calls again to raise our rent by 50 percent.

4. Walking in East Jerusalem the week of the stabbings, I am frightened. For the first time since the beginning of the intifada, I am aware of looking Jewish in East Jerusalem, and ask a friend who lives in Ramallah to accompany me. He tells me that he is now afraid to walk around even West Jerusalem.

By the Damascus Gate, a black-cloaked Chasidic Jew passes a Palestinian dressed in a robe and *kaffiyeh*. Each carries an identical cardboard box. Inside is a plastic crib for use during a poison gas attack. The instructions read: "After placing the infant in the protective infant carrier, all treatment of the infant must be performed by using the glove sleeve. DO NOT OPEN until directions are given to take off the protective masks." In the air this week: common fear about a threat that does not differentiate between religions or nationalities.

5. I am in the Ministry of Interior, getting my papers in order to receive my gas mask. The office is packed with Russian immigrants there to get their citizenship papers. The overworked clerk is beside herself with the scores of people congregating around her desk and spilling over into the hallways. Most of the Russians do not speak Hebrew; she knows no Russian.

Her impatience grows as the morning progresses. Finally, completely losing her cool, she begins to scream at the new immigrant standing before her: "I hate Russians, you Russians are all shit, why don't you go back to

---

Aaron Back, a lecturer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is a member of Tikkun's Israel Editorial Group and coordinator of Tikkun's activities in Israel.

where you came from and leave us in peace?"

The Russian, dressed in a rough shirt and imitation jeans, smiles through gritted gold teeth and backs away. For years, he has stood in similar lines in the Soviet Union, withstood the abuse of the system, and learned to survive. No doubt he has faced clerks far surlier than this one. He goes back to the end of the line, determined to try again, in this, the country of his people.

6. On the first wintry night in Jerusalem, we go to the reunion of the Lamaze class we'd finished earlier in the summer. We sit together with the other "graduates," proudly showing off our new babies. We take turns swapping stories of coping with the early months. Justin tells us that he has found a surefire remedy for calming his crying baby when all else fails. He lifts up his pant leg to reveal the revolver tucked in its ankle holster.

In later conversation, he explains that Israel's policy of house demolition is no more severe than examples of collective punishment one finds in the United States. There too, a family can lose their house through foreclosure when the family breadwinner is sent to jail. Justin works in the Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Justice. □

Sidra Ezrahi

There has been a marked retrenchment among the peace forces in Israel over the past few months, at least partially attributable to the growing recognition that to some extent both Israel and the Palestinians may be pawns in a larger and deadlier game. In the past two years we in the peace movement and our counterparts in the Palestinian camp felt that we were helping to localize and humanize a conflict that had assumed global dimensions and an absolutist rhetoric. The rising tide of bloodshed and the rhetoric of mutual annihilation began to seem reversible.

But since the Palestinian support for the invasion of Kuwait, following hard upon the "Unity" government's collapse and Likud's return to power, the peace forces have felt overwhelmed by the ascendancy of extremists bent upon mutual destruction. Collective paranoia, fed by relentless memories of persecution and martyrdom, is easily triggered by the introduction of apocalyptic weapons.

I have been involved with the Israeli peace movement's attempt over the past two years to build a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians on the local level. The central task of these dialogues was to prevent the reflexive hatred of "the other" that feeds a siege mentality. The intifada caused people on both sides to dedicate themselves to reducing the conflict to a human scale. For a moment we succeeded in making Palestinians visible in Israeli politics, in part by bringing into this dialogue people from the "silent majority," Jews who had never dreamed of encountering the enemy face-to-face and on equal terms.

But since the PLO has apparently decided to lay down the olive branch and pick up the automatic rifle, and Israel's border guards and policemen have turned trigger-happy, these efforts have come to an end. We have lost the support of both sides of the street. More and more people in Israel seem to be supporting the concept of a "quiet transfer" of thousands of Palestinians from "Greater Israel." The arrival of thousands of Russian Jews could camouflage such an operation as a "population exchange." After the stabbings in Baka (one of the heartlands of the peace movement) and the subsequent acts of terrorism all over Israel, *most* Israelis, including many hard-core peace activists, would be happy to see the streets free of any Arab presence. The new fear—for individual as well as group survival—has generated the most primitive psychological responses. Once the enemy is no longer the soldier in the field or even the boy behind a tree on the other side of the Green Line, but any Palestinian walking down *our* street with a knife hidden in his clothing, our neighborhood becomes a battlefield. It is no wonder, then, that after the Temple Mount incident we could get no more than a small handful of people into the streets for a demonstration, whereas after Sabra and Shatila (where, after all, Israelis had not directly participated in the killings) close to half a million people showed up to register their shock and protest.

Jews who have been stabbed or shot are converted instantly into martyrs, and the rhetoric of vengeance triumphs in the land. The religious nationalist lexicon is filled with the charged terms of Jewish memory, against which our vocabulary of human rights and dignity, mutual respect, and self-determination makes little headway.

The cultural task of the Right is to demonize and the cultural task of the Left is to humanize. As I write, the demonizers have won the hour. The Palestinians are collectively referred to as "terrorists," as the archetypal

---

Sidra Ezrahi teaches comparative Jewish literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A member of Tikkun*'s editorial board, she was one of the activists in the dialogue group in the West Bank town of Beit Sahur.*

biblical villains, the Amalekites, with whom one does not dream of negotiating. And in the Palestinian camp anti-Semitic undercurrents surface increasingly frequently.

One still holds to the hope that some vestiges of the famous Israeli "pragmatism" remain, that those peace-loving impulses that made possible Sadat's 1977 visit to Jerusalem and the subsequent peace treaty with Egypt are merely dormant. And yet I wonder, in my darker moments, whether the Jewish demonization of the Palestinians has gone too far this time to be reversed. Even the Left has begun to talk of "disengagement" between Israelis and Palestinians, and has abandoned, for the present at least, both practical and moral arguments for conciliation. That may be a necessary strategy under the present circumstances, but it is dangerous and it is a measure of how much ground we have lost. □

A Peace-Camp Activist

A well-known leader of the peace camp agreed to an interview on condition of anonymity. We reprint here some of the highlights of that interview.

We spent a lot of time showing the Israeli public that we could find Palestinian moderates, Faisal Husseini and Sara Nusseiba for example, who would be willing to negotiate and who had reasonable positions. Even though these particular moderates still sound reasonable, and are even willing to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the shift in Israeli public opinion engendered by the widespread endorsement of Saddam Hussein by Palestinians now makes the moderate Palestinians an irrelevant focus for our attention. No matter how many moderates we come up with, after Iraq and the mass Palestinian response to it we are *not* going to convince the average Israeli that these moderates really speak for the majority of their own people.

All the more reason, then, for us to insist that a peace process must begin with the PLO, *precisely* because they are perceived as the more extreme enemy, and hence if we were to attempt to make peace with local Palestinians many people would rightly wonder if these local moderates could *deliver* a real peace. The fact is that only one-third of the Palestinian people now reside in the Territories—so to follow the Shamir plan for negotiations with representatives of the territory (the plan we've been pushing him to implement ever since he torpedoed his own plan) potentially puts us in the position of championing an agreement that the majority of Palestinians may feel doesn't really represent them and wasn't arrived at through their own organizational representatives. I want the agreement to be with the PLO because I want the Palestinian people to be saying that they give up the right of return to the land within the pre-1967 borders of Israel (i.e., within the Green Line)—and that will have international legitimacy only when it is the representatives of those Palestinians who are living in exile, the PLO, who sign this agreement.

This leads me to reject the path of the Shamir peace plan. I think that path led nowhere and that we shouldn't put our energy into trying to revive it. That path—negotiations in Egypt, leading to elections in the Territories, leading to more negotiations over autonomy—I don't need that and it's going nowhere. We fell into the trap that Shamir set for us. He led the Americans and the Israeli public down a path that, ultimately, he would block himself.

This is only one of the traps set for us by the Right that we fell into. All along we've given in to their demand that we show them how reasonable the enemy is, that we demonstrate that the Palestinians have their own version of a Peace Now—supposedly *that* would convince the Right that there were Palestinians really seeking peace. I think it's time for us to recognize that it doesn't really matter whether the Palestinians use terror or whether they have Peace Now—our reason for speaking to them is that they are our enemies and so it is with them that peace must be arranged. The only condition is that they want to sit down and speak to us.

This past week Israeli right-wingers were collecting signatures on a petition calling on the government to implement "transfer"—that is, the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to neighboring Arab countries. Instead of issuing press statements and position papers, we would be much more effective if we were to go down to "the street" and fight for influence there. One way for us to do that would be to launch a major campaign against "transfer."

The divisions that are happening in the peace camp today about tactics partly reflect a deeper division about what our future is going to look like. One position is that we need a future in which we will all be friendly with the Palestinian people; another that we need a real separation. Some people think that the only road to peace must lie through some kind of friendship, that the future relationship must start now on a personal level. I know that there are some people in the peace camp who meet with many different Palestinians

every week—and they think that this is a giant contribution to peace. I don't think this is the way. I think some of these people feel that they need to demonstrate to themselves that the Palestinians are like themselves, that they have counterparts in the Palestinian camp.

I know the argument that holds that we need to demonize the Palestinians. But you can't convince the Israeli public, because when things don't go well at some point of the struggle a few Palestinians will commit some outrageous act and the demonization will be back in place. In any event, all this activity is somewhat irrelevant, because it is not the people who will make peace, but the government. And there's no real demonization there—the government *uses* demonization, but Shamir has said many times that he knows that it is the Arab states, not the Palestinians, who are threatening to destroy Israel. That's why his peace plan is now emphasizing the necessity to have peace first with the Arab states and then to work out something with the Palestinians.

The peace movement could take these statements by Shamir and use them more effectively to increase our political leverage. But we don't, in part because of the growing trend inside the peace movement to despair of ever having any influence, a trend that then translates into a certain level of passivity or an attraction to the politics of "moral witness" instead of a politics aimed at having a real effect. The growing admiration for "Women in Black" is for me an indication of that sense of futility—they stand on that corner every Friday afternoon for one hour, without in any way attempting to shape or influence or respond to events. They avoid speaking to the public, they don't want to convince anybody, if people start talking to them they don't answer, they don't have fliers to explain why they are standing there—it's an exercise in powerlessness and despair.

There is a trend like this within Peace Now—but



that's not what I want for our movement. That's why I hope we develop a campaign against "transfer." People can be mobilized around this. It's very important for us to be seen, standing in the streets, sometimes with signs, sometimes with petitions, sometimes with demonstrations—the important thing is to have a public presence. Right now there is an absence of a Left presence in the national debate, and the only way our voice will be taken seriously is if we create a real physical presence on the grassroots level. □

YARON EZRAHI

By concentrating on efforts to legitimate the Palestinians as partners for political negotiation the Israeli Left has allowed the Right to label its position as naive and dangerously utopian. When Palestinian support for Saddam alienated the Israeli public, it appeared as though the Israeli Left had decisively lost its cause. If the Israeli peace camp is to remain a viable force, it must shift its political strategy, focusing less on the moral issue and more on the reasons why a propeace perspective can best address Israel's long-term security problems.

Recent events have exposed the weakness of the Right's approach. The spread of violence between the Jewish and the Palestinian populations, and particularly the many cases of stabbing and shooting of Israelis by Arabs, have undermined the Right's claim that Arabs and Jews can live peacefully and securely without borders separating the two nations. And the impressive international coalition against Saddam Hussein and the restoration of the United Nations' strength should be an adequate warning to those on the Right who hoped that the world

Yaron Ezrahi is professor of political science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

would allow Israel to get away with attempts at "transfer." So those moderate right-wingers who really do care about security may have more reason than ever to give serious consideration to the peace movement's insistence that only the kind of separation that would come with the creation of a Palestinian state could bring us some degree of safety in our streets.

On the other hand, peace movement people are probably more open today to one aspect of Shamir's program than they had been before. The Gulf crisis has convinced many Israelis in the peace camp that an Israeli–Palestinian agreement would not be adequate for Israeli security, except in the context of a collective regional security system that included such states as Syria and Iraq. This is one reason why reclaiming the Palestinians as partners should not be a political priority right now.

Yet to achieve this peace with our neighbors, Israel is going to have to be willing to allow the birth of a demilitarized Palestinian state. It's up to us to remind the Israeli public that Israel can much more easily defend itself militarily against incursions from a Palestinian state than it can from the infinite variety of violent acts on the part of thousands of frustrated Palestinians who are, for all practical purposes, held prisoner by Israel in the Occupied Territories. The relatively quiet border between Israel and Syria demonstrates this point—and a demilitarized Palestinian state is likely to be considerably weaker than Syria.

It is in these security terms that the argument must now be conducted—and in these terms the peace movement is on very strong grounds. Territorial compromise would reduce the incentives for the enemy to attack. And the diversion of massive resources from defense to the successful absorption of the immigrants from the Soviet Union that a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians and a regional collective security system would allow could have an important military consequence as well: successfully absorbing Soviet Jews would increase the size of the Israeli army and contribute an important strategic asset. The Gulf crisis is also the moment to discuss a process of regional disarmament. While Israel would, of course, seek to eliminate the chemical, biological, and nuclear capacities of surrounding states, it might also be willing to consider cuts in its own nuclear potential if those cuts were to be matched by cuts in the overwhelming conventional superiority of the Arab states that has heretofore justified Israel's nuclear weapons capacity. The peace camp might also advocate "non-provocative defense," a strategy informing collective security policy in Europe, whereby military and technological systems are designed to provide protection against attacks without being easily convertible into offensive instruments of war.

Thinking in these terms, rather than lamenting the lost dialogue with the Palestinians, is most likely to advance the cause of peace with security. If the Israeli peace camp combines its traditional commitment to the politics of hope for a viable settlement with a serious, tough-minded, and imaginative defense doctrine for Israel, it may discover the political formula to defeat the Right, which is chained to the politics of fear, entrenchment, and endless conflict. □



West Bank Palestinians working in Israel are now suspected of being potential terrorists.

Rabbi David Forman

Some people have argued that now that the Palestinians have sided with Saddam Hussein, they have shown that the peace movement made a serious mistake by seeming to place at the center of our agenda the moral rights of the Palestinians to national self-determination and civil liberties. According to this argument, the peace movement should have focused on why a Palestinian state would serve Israel's own interests.

I understand why that argument has some appeal to some sectors of the peace movement—and precisely for that reason I'm glad we have a distinct religious peace movement that takes a very different perspective. For religious Jews, morality does not depend upon compari-

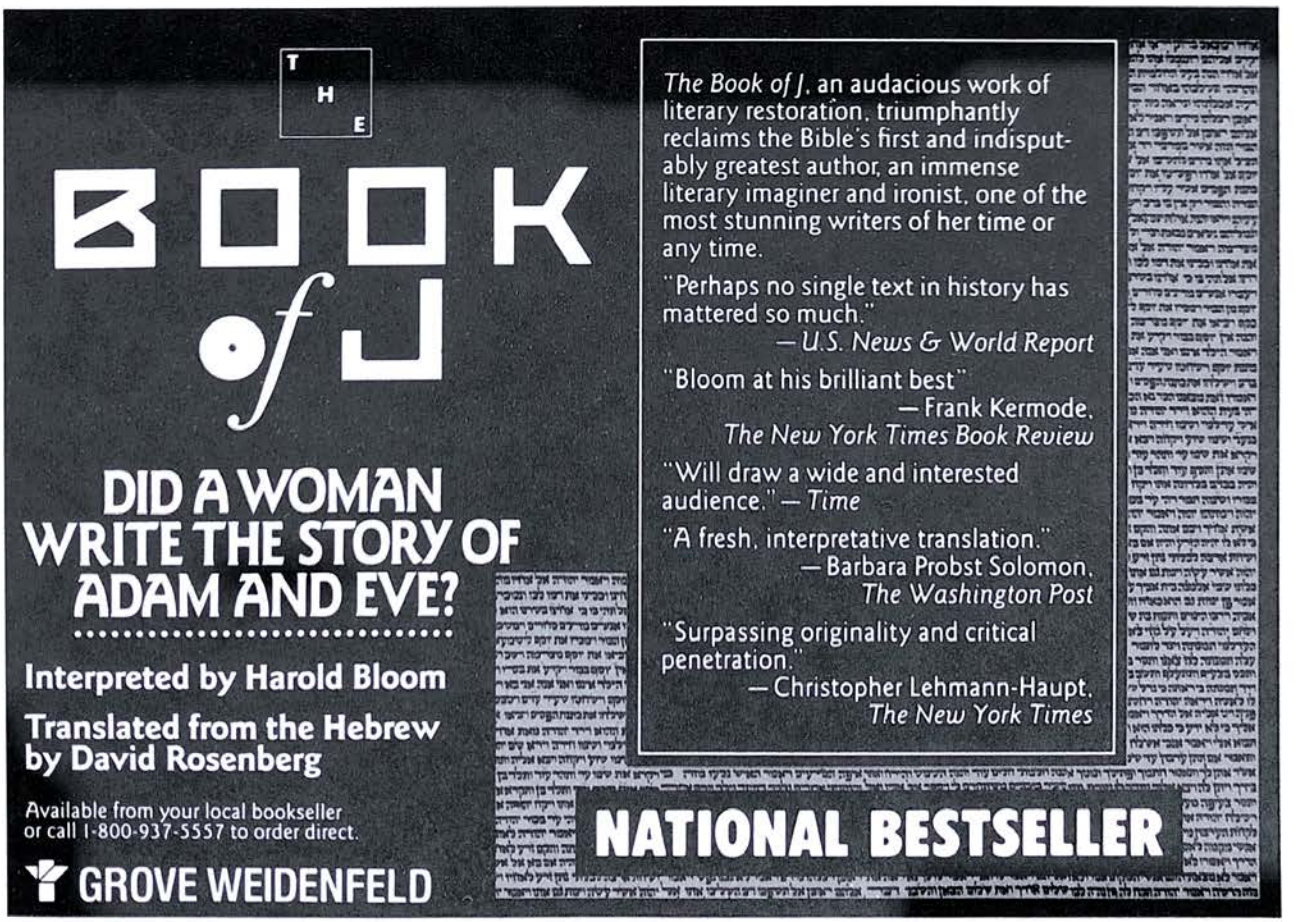
Rabbi David Forman is the director of Israel Programs for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Jerusalem and the founder and chairperson of the Rabbinic Human Rights Watch, a human rights organization of over eighty Israeli rabbis from all branches of Judaism.

sons. I cannot guarantee the moral standards of the Palestinians; in fact, I can't even judge them based on their own moral code of ethics. But I can judge myself with regard to what I understand to be a Jewish religious approach to moral behavior. For us to use the lowest common denominator of the world's morality to justify immoral acts on our part, or to invite invidious comparisons to oppressive regimes in other countries as a yardstick to measure our morality, undermines everything I believe Judaism teaches. Our prophets, advocates of social justice, never engaged in comparative morality. They said, "This is what we are supposed to do—A, B, C, and D—quite apart from whatever else is happening in the world." When a Yossi Sarid says, "You guys have supported Saddam, so now you have to come after me if you want peace, I'm not going to be chasing after you," I simply cannot understand what he is doing. No matter how bad the other side, one must always maintain one's own moral integrity. If we don't operate that way, we cease to be a Jewish state. If we give up the ethical values that were born out of the experience of Egyptian slavery, we have lost our way. Our escape from Egypt symbolized the ultimate rejection of everything that was wrong with the world. As a people, we rejected the immorality that comes from the abuse of power, an abuse that enslaved us. And we rejected all this in order to establish a whole new world order in which morality in politics and personal behavior would hold sway.

Saddam Hussein's intentions, whatever they may be, don't allow me to commit crimes that go against what I understand to be Jewish ethical behavior.

Without the ethical moorings provided by a religious perspective, the peace movement in Israel merely reacts to each particular event. Too much of the politics of secular peace activists is based on deracinated realpolitik. When faced with a crisis, they can think only in terms of the most expedient way to reach the path for peace, whereas we in the religious peace movement would say that the most expedient way is that which has characterized us as a people: our belief that the dignity and sanctity of human life is rooted in the universal teachings found within Judaism, and given expression throughout Jewish history. Hillel's statement, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others" is not a slogan to be unfurled at a peace rally, but a value with a binding moral force to it. Slogans rarely stand the test of time; value-laden ideas span generations.

No wonder, then, that the secular peace movement currently appears to be full of depression—it doesn't have a rooted Jewish theoretical or historical framework within which to locate itself or its current activities and problems. □



IRAQ AROUND THE CLOCK

As Michael Lerner makes clear in his editorial in this issue, we oppose the war that Bush has been planning. We abhor what Saddam Hussein has done, not only by invading Kuwait but also in his murderous treatment of Iraq's Kurdish minority and in his brutal suppression of all Iraqis. But we do not believe that a headlong rush into war will solve anything. Though we are pleased that President Bush sent Secretary of State James Baker to meet with Saddam Hussein, we believe that the economic boycott is justified and should be given a chance to work—even if that takes another year. More generally, we believe that war is an evil that must be avoided whenever possible. In our last issue, Lerner considered the possibility that it might become impossible to avoid war with Iraq. But he argued that the U.S. should consider the possibility of war only after exhausting every other means to achieve the reasonable aim of dismantling Iraq's offensive military capacity. We need to take the time necessary to pursue every plausible alternative to war. Any war begun in early 1991 would be premature and therefore should be opposed.

In the discussions that follow, we continue to present a variety of political perspectives on the conflict with Iraq that are likely to remain relevant regardless of what happens on January 15. □

TODD GITLIN: GIVE COLLECTIVE SECURITY A CHANCE

What is at stake in the Persian Gulf is indeed, as George Bush said back in August, "our way of life"—but not in the sense he intended. What is at stake is the nature of the world order, or disorder, that will follow the cold war.

As I write, the Bush administration is scrambling for reasons to justify war, flailing around in search of compelling rhetoric. It has nominated, in succession, Kuwait's sovereignty, "our way of life," cheap oil, control of oil, a New World Order, hostages, jobs, and Iraq's nuclear capacity as likely candidates. Much punditry has been devoted to rhetorical criticism—"the president has not made a case"—as if once Bush had made a case the question of how to justify war would be neatly resolved, thank you very much. Now the administration seems poised to conduct its military campaign the way it conducted its political campaign: using polls to identify themes-of-the-week. For all we know, focus groups are being assembled at this very moment, and market researchers are interrogating them in order to see whether the issue of Saddam Hussein's nuclear capacity has legs, or whether on the contrary it might be time to call upon the New World Order leitmotif.

It is all very cynical, this drive to push the hot buttons of public opinion; but Bush's rhetorical incapacity only masks the real crisis. Whether reasons or rationalizations, Bush's inventory of war motives distracts attention from more ominous matters. The first is that while Bush desperately fumbles around in search of the vision thing, he is far more disposed to plunge ahead with the action thing. When Bush is in doubt, he reaches for the 101st Airborne. What has been striking throughout the four months of the Iraq crisis is the *discrepancy* between Bush's military commitment and his logical justifications.

Bush's initial commitment ran on two tracks. While sending an expeditionary force to Saudi Arabia, he worked the phones to pull together an international coalition. This combination of unilateral and multilateral action won the initial, if grudging, support of many anti-interventionists. Saddam Hussein was without question an aggressor with a taste for torture and genocide. The Arab League, the regional arrangement of first resort, had failed abysmally to take action. The UN-supported embargo seemed to be the sort of solution to warm the heart of anyone who had been enamored of the 1930s internationalist rhetoric of collective security. The resuscitation of the UN Security Council—or even only its military consultative wing—seemed to promise a globalism that would finally enforce international law. Here was the chance to leap from international anarchy to cooperation on a grand scale.

But within weeks, the George Bush reared on Munich and Skull and Bones and World War II combat had sprung to the fore. The man loves small groups that give him freedom of action. Inept at bargaining with Congress and, by all accounts, distinctly uninterested in domestic policy, Bush now had a cause to propel him into the role that suits him best: Commander in Chief. One thing he knew, by God: he would not be a wimp. Saddam Hussein had made his day. Hunkering down in his bivouac at Kennebunkport with Messrs. Cheney and Scowcroft, Bush did what he enjoys most—bonding with males, whining and blustering at villains, and deploying troops. These are not the folkways of a democratic leader, these are the tropisms of a war

---

Todd Gitlin, professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author, most recently, of The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage *(Bantam, 1987).*

chieftain. He seems to share Bismarck's *Weltanschauung:* "Better pointed bullets than pointed speeches." Suddenly there was no time for sanctions—they would tie the hands of the Commander in Chief. Was his post-election doubling of the American deployment accompanied by behind-the-scenes diplomatic moves? Was he perhaps better versed in the intricacies of diplomacy than he let on? Writing at the bitter end of November, I hope so but fear the answer is no.

For the moment, with the help of Saddam Hussein, the administration has solved the problem that has haunted it for two years: what map of the world to draw now that the blithe oversimplifications of the cold war are no longer at hand? He has—for the moment—solved the enemy crisis on the cheap, after expending what little imaginative capital he had on General Noriega. Recall that for several months into 1989, the administration steadfastly refused to admit that the cold war was over, even though the enemy had quit the field. Bush waited to speak those magic words until he had established the substitute principle: *force majeure*. He likes standing astride the world's sole superpower. While speaking the language of the New World Order, he repairs to various practices of the Old World Order. He beefed up Iraq against Iran, then flashed a green light (via Ambassador April Glaspie) to Saddam Hussein a week before Iraq marched into Kuwait, all in the interest of building up regional superpowers. This is the strategy that tied the U.S. to the Shah's Iran and now promises to tie the U.S. to Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey in the next round. At the helm of the only superpower that is both a military and an economic powerhouse, Bush has been able to buy Security Council acquiescence in war, even though the sanctions haven't been fairly tested.

When collective security is taken seriously, war is always avoidable, and this war doubly so—precisely because the bloody consequences can be foreseen, as if they were already unfolding in slow motion. There is another reason as well: the collective-security side of the operation has been a considerable success. Among the many reasons why war on Iraq would be short-sighted as well as vile is that it would hurl the United Nations back into the long night of geopolitical redundancy. War would jeopardize whatever consensus has been built on collective action to restore Kuwait. It would forego the opportunity to create a transnational, UN-supervised military force capable of protecting contested boundaries. (Eastern and Central Europe, please take note.) It would make Saddam Hussein a hero in the Arab world for a long time to come. It would worsen the prospects for an Israeli–Palestinian settlement. And it would discredit whatever genuine prospects exist for a *real* New World Order to follow the cold war.

Simply because the term New World Order turns to hypocrisy in Bush's mouth doesn't mean that we don't need the real thing. Building on the Security Council and the World Court, the world should bolster the military and legal institutions that can make global security more than a matter of lip service. Note too, that Bush's sudden enthusiasm for the UN cuts more than one way—if the Security Council and World Court decisions are binding, they are binding, too, on Israel with respect to the Occupied Territories and on the United States with respect to Nicaragua. Can it be said often enough that the global problems of security, economy, ecology, and resource depletion are too global in their reach, too enormous in their consequences, to be left to one superpower, one bloc, one region, one hemisphere?

Make no mistake: Saddam Hussein is not some nightmare being conjured by George Bush. He, and others like him, are going to vex the causes of peace, equity, and human rights for a long time. Not even the redistribution of the world's resources—including both capital and oil—will make him disappear. All the world's diplomatic finesses and joint institutions will be needed to keep him from becoming even more of a power than he already is. Let the Security Council have the time to enforce containment and permit the sanctions to work—and let the U.S. stop twisting arms and calling in ships to coax the Security Council into jumping to the gun. But even here, let realism prevail. There is not going to be a solution that accomplishes every valuable goal. Even if sanctions succeed in driving Saddam out of all or most of Kuwait, they will leave his nuclear, chemical, and germ warfare plants in place—this has to be admitted and faced by antiwar activists and diplomats alike. There will be no quick fixes—only protracted negotiations to defuse the region.

But Hitler-haunted pundits like William Safire who insist that the alternatives are war and appeasement, period, ignore the third choice, collective security—precisely what was abandoned in the 1930s *in favor of* appeasement. Genuine collective security would have stopped Hitler in Spain, or in the Rhineland, or at Munich. The line has been drawn now to block Saddam Hussein's path to further conquests—thanks to collective security. But everything collective action achieved can be jeopardized by the drive toward war. Collective security is too important to be left to the feverish delirium of the American Commander in Chief. □

On Just Wars: An Interview With Michael Walzer

Tikkun: You've written extensively about "just wars." Are we facing such a war in Iraq?

Walzer: The first question raised by the "just war theory" is whether the war can legitimately be fought. This does not seem to be a hard question in the case of Iraq. Saddam Hussein initiated a war against Iran, then used weapons of mass destruction against a national minority within his own country, then initiated another war of conquest against another neighboring country (Kuwait), conquered it, looted it—it's hard to imagine a better candidate for a "just war."

But that doesn't mean that we ought to fight. This leads us to another set of questions, whether we can fight against Iraq justly. And to questions about the extent of the war, the impact of the war, the long-term consequences of the war.

Tikkun: After Vietnam, how could it be legitimate to fight against this regime?

Walzer: The Left has learned too many lessons from the one case of Vietnam. The analogies with Hitler that are frequently introduced by those favoring intervention don't work so well either. It is more fruitful to think of the analogy with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. The League of Nations tried to enforce economic sanctions, but there was no willingness on the part of the major powers to back up that move with force. Had it worked, this kind of collective security might have been applied effectively to Hitler. Collective security depends on the willingness of some of the participating countries to back up their measures with force. If you impose an embargo, you have to use force to stop others from breaking the embargo. We've already done that in the Gulf.

In the case of Iraq, we are not, nor should we be, trying to starve the people so that their desperation will force the government to withdraw from Kuwait. This is not a conventional siege. If it works, it will work by shutting down Iraq's industry and preventing the maintenance of Iraq's war machine. But Saddam Hussein can let his war machine run down indefinitely if he has no reason to believe that he would have to fight. So sanctions only work if he *believes* that it is very dangerous for him to let his war machine run down because he might face a military assault that would crush him.

Michael Walzer is a professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study. His most recent book is The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century *(Basic Books, 1988).*

Tikkun: So this is a strong argument against those on the Left who say that we should only be talking about negotiations and should not be raising the military pressure on Saddam. Their fear is that once we have four hundred thousand people there to give us what Bush calls "offensive military capacity," plus we have the UN resolutions authorizing "any means necessary" to liberate Kuwait, the momentum toward war will be unstoppable. You, on the other hand, think that without that kind of credible threat the sanctions themselves have no chance of being taken seriously.

Walzer: But Bush's bar on troop rotation seems to lock us into a specific date, as though we had no confidence in our own will. We ought to be working diplomatically to create an alliance that would be capable of choosing war if that became the right choice.

Tikkun: When would that be the right choice?

Walzer: One of the criteria is "last resort"—but that's a difficult criterion to meet, because there's always something more that can be done—another meeting, another diplomatic note. And while I don't want the U.S. locked into a specific date, as the January 15 deadline seems to do, I also think it appropriate to remember that Iraq is the status quo power—they are happy with the status quo, we are the ones who need to change things. So they can be perfectly content with indefinite postponements. For the U.S., war might become necessary if we felt that the Iraqi military machine was *not* breaking down, that the embargo was not working, or that our alliance was in danger of breaking up.

Our boycott strategy assumes that Saddam's military capacity will eventually suffer severe deterioration. The point is not only to force him out of Kuwait but also to try to reach the point where what Saddam has in military hardware is largely unusable. But if Iraq has adequate scientific and technical resources and personnel that could keep their military machine intact, that would be relevant information that would spell the futility of the embargo and would make it more likely that we should judge that we were ready for a "last resort."

Tikkun: Some people worry that the Pentagon, once it had its troops in place, would be likely to make the assessment that the boycott was failing. But since it would be depending on classified information, we would have no way to assess their statements, and might be forced to follow them into a war that we'd prefer not to fight if there were any reasonable way not to fight it. The Pentagon may be needing this war both to

justify its continued high defense budget and to justify its need for complicated military hardware—so doesn't this give it an incentive to see the embargo as failing?

Walzer: But they might tilt in the opposite way. They might want to avoid the war because they don't want to show the failure of the various military technologies to which they are committed (maybe they are not doing so well in simulated war games). Generals are not always eager to fight. It's civilian politicians who more often throughout history have led their popula-tions into wars. There may be some segments of the U.S. military who seek vindication after Vietnam and who would thus lean toward a war, but I haven't seen an overeagerness for war on the part of our generals.

Tikkun: How do you understand the discussion that's taking place on the Left at this moment? There seems to be a convergence of opinion in opposition to Bush's policies. What do you make of that?

Walzer: There are some people on the sectarian Left who are trying to talk about U.S. imperialism, trying to give a Marxist account of this situation (an implausible project, it seems to me). But most leftists seem to be thinking in more complex terms. Many oppose the mobilization of troops and the specific target date that Bush has chosen, not because they think that any intervention would necessarily be wrong, but because they think that other options have not yet been adequately tried.

But the hard issue for the Left is whether to acknowledge that the U.S. ought to play a leadership role in the world in creating collective security—which means being willing to be involved in repelling aggression in some distant part of the world. This is not unlike the French response to the Libyan invasion of Chad some years back (there was no oil in Chad, but there were commitments roughly similar to ours in Kuwait). Ditto the British in the Falklands: there was no oil in the Falklands, the British fought for ideological reasons. A war with Iraq is likely to be much bloodier; but we are also responsible for that fact, since we played a part in building up its forces.

We have the obligations of a great power. . . .

Tikkun: What exactly are these "obligations"? This kind of language has often been used as a cover for America's interventionism in the post–World War II period.

Walzer: There is a rough conception of law and order, of how social change ought to occur, a rough conception of what constitutes criminality. But there is no global government, there is only self-help and mutual aid. So a great deal of responsibility falls on countries that are strong enough to help others. The U.S. was acting in accord with that role in South Korea, but not in Vietnam.

Tikkun: But why say that about South Korea? Wasn't South Korea run by a dictator?

Walzer: So was Ethiopia in 1937, but that didn't keep most people on the Left from recognizing the need to defend him. What we were defending was the idea of a border and the safety and security that everyone enjoys when borders are recognized. The question of democracy comes second. First one defends Haile Selassie on the issue of borders; later one reaches the issue of democracy. But they are separate questions. The attack on Kuwait was a much greater threat to the possibility of *any* world order than is the fact that Iraq or Kuwait is undemocratic.

Tikkun: But what about the argument made by many on the Left that these borders are arbitrary, the manifestations of imperialism created by thuggery and power. By that argument, why should they be respected?

Walzer: They were all drawn by drunken diplomats at a bacchanalia. It doesn't matter, so long as people live in peace on either side of them. There is no security without borders. There have to be procedures for peaceful change. And there have been such changes, sometimes under economic or even military pressure, but nevertheless without war.

For example, in the Soviet Union many new borders will be drawn, and later redrawn, if we are lucky, without war—through political agitation, civil disobedience, mobilization of a population, sometimes even the threat to fight in the last resort. Or these boundaries could be drawn in the way Norway seceded from Sweden, based on an appeal to shared principles.

Tikkun: Returning to the issue of the "responsibility of a great power". . .

Walzer: Yes, this is a very hard issue because of the distrust so many people on the Left have toward America and toward the idea of great powers.

Tikkun: Are we wrong to be distrustful?

Walzer: We are wrong to pretend that there can be an international order of nation states within which leadership roles won't have to be distributed.

Tikkun: Leadership roles aren't being "distributed," they are being taken by the powerful. Aren't we "a great power" primarily because we are powerful?

Walzer: But many countries and peoples in the world (including our friends on the Israeli Left) are asking us to play this role . . . and there are many Americans who don't want to play it. Were those Americans to win, then it would be appropriate to say that there was an effort to give us this role and we turned it down. When the Chadians asked the French to come in and help them against Libya, this was an attempt by a weak country to get help to protect itself against a local bully.

Tikkun: It always seems as though the people who ask the U.S. to be involved are themselves local elites that have stayed in power in the past by virtue of the U.S. or other imperial powers giving them support. It would be very different if there were a democratic vote of people in the region asking for our involvement.

Walzer: But there can't be a democratic vote in the region at this point, because this is not Arkansas, this is the Middle East, which has a different political history.

Tikkun: It is precisely that difference in political history that makes it inappropriate to say that we were invited in by the people in the region.

Walzer: Sometimes that's entirely true, and sometimes it isn't. There's a tendency on the Left (and on the Right as well) to develop one political principle or one set of analyses, and then imagine that one never has to think again, all one has to do is to apply one's previously developed categories. But every case is different. One needs to know in each case "Who is doing what to whom?" and that question doesn't always have the same answer. It is as if we are expected to be orthodox members of a Left that pretends to despise orthodoxy.

Tikkun: When *Tikkun* congratulated the U.S. for standing up against Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, some of the people responding simply questioned whether Kuwait *really* was a country in the first place. They pointed out that a majority of people in that country may not have considered themselves Kuwaitis, that there was no shared sense of history or culture. Perhaps Kuwait was more like a large country club, with the majority of people feeling like visitors.

Walzer: It looked enough like a country.

Tikkun: But this is where the waters look a little murky.

Walzer: It doesn't start there. It starts with the refusal of some people on the Left to recognize the Iraqi regime for what it is, to acknowledge what it has done, and to allow any legitimate political role for the U.S. in the world.

Nobody on the Left, in the face of Italian aggression, asked whether Ethiopia was really a country (in fact, it was an empire) or what kind of a ruler Haile Selassie was. Not because they were sympathetic to Ethiopian imperialism or to Haile Selassie's rule, but because they recognized Italian fascism as something that had to be opposed.

Tikkun: Because the Left had not yet gone through a Vietnam in which the U.S. used the analogy of stopping Hitler to justify its immoral intervention.

Walzer: Right. I understand that. But the history of *my* lifetime includes World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and many other U.S. involvements. We need to tell each story on its own terms.

Tikkun: Well, telling the story of Kuwait on its own terms: does this justify U.S. military intervention?

Walzer: The aggression against Kuwait, by itself, justifies a forceful response, which doesn't necessarily mean a military invasion. And in the case of Saddam Hussein, with his history of interventions against his neighbors, his threat to develop nuclear weapons, there's an especially powerful case for a strong stand—to mobilize world opinion and world economic power against him. And to prepare oneself to fight successfully (in the hope that being prepared one doesn't have to fight). I'm in favor of creating an international alliance, a total blockade, forces sufficient for a war.

We should be searching out every source from which the Iraqis ever drew military technology, publicizing each one, and taking measures now to ensure that under any political conditions in the foreseeable future the supply from those sources is not renewed. And if we can't do that, that would be one reason on the side of taking military action. But if we do take military action, we still have to worry about how to do that in a just way. If we launch an air attack, for example, we have to work very hard to hit targets that don't entail large numbers of civilian casualties—even if in taking this kind of care we raise the risks for our own pilots.

What makes me anxious about people on the Left is that because they want so much to live in a world where fighting would be unnecessary, they think they *already* live in such a world. But Saddam Hussein is not a coresident of a world of that sort. □

Fred Smoler: The Iraqi Arsenal

Michael Lerner has advocated the destruction of Iraq's offensive military capacity, chiefly its potential and actual chemical and nuclear systems. He has aroused a storm of controversy as a result. But what does Iraq's real offensive military capacity consist of, and whom does it menace?

Effective Iraqi military power stems from a wild profusion of conventional armaments, particularly tanks—many of them obsolescent—and some variably effective air defenses. Saddam's ability to hold onto Kuwait depends on even less sophisticated weapons; if the U.S. attacks entrenched Iraqi troops, most American casualties will be inflicted by artillery fire—more or less the way our forefathers were killed in France in 1918, or (for that matter) in Fredericksburg during the American Civil War.

Iraq's offensive capacity does not rest, and has never rested, upon its dubiously effective exotic weaponry. Saddam is a threat because he relies on bulk conventional weaponry exported by the Soviets, supplemented with high-end conventional arms exported by NATO states, and crucial odds and ends exported by the Chinese, the Brazilians, and the South Africans (ballistic missile technology in the first two cases and very-long-range artillery in the last). This is what has permitted him to terrify and now conquer weak Gulf states, defeat or overawe regional rivals—Iran, Syria, and Turkey—and thumb his nose at us.

Saddam has no comparable ability vis-à-vis Israel. He possesses neither a common border nor overwhelming military superiority; his troops, possibly formidable in entrenchments, are much less threatening in a maneuver battle. As for his noisy threats about burning half the country, Israel, which is generally believed to possess a fair number of deliverable nuclear weapons, is capable of inflicting assured destruction on Iraq. And Iraqi delivery systems—aircraft and ballistic missiles—are by no means sure to penetrate Israeli defenses. To consider the problems of Iraqi military capacity from the point of view of Israeli vulnerability calls to mind the proverbial grandmother's question about the plane crash: "And how many Jews were killed?" The question is at best unseemly, and in this case inapposite. Saddam is a grave menace to his own people and a real threat to his weaker neighbors—the example he is setting is potentially very dangerous indeed to new states with expansionist neighbors, and these states cover the postcolonial map. But conventional war or strategic bombardment are the least terrible risks the Israelis face. The continuing polarization and stalemate of Israeli politics, the continuing erosion of a democratic and liberal political culture, and the slow and steady poison of the Occupation are very grave threats. The military potential of Iraq is a threat chiefly because it allows too many people to pretend that it is still 1966.

Military high technology is rarely a threat itself; it can in fact be stabilizing. Only a few states are troublesome because of their military capabilities. NATO and the Warsaw Pact fondly believe that for the last forty-five years they have deterred one another by complex alliances and elaborate force structures. Most technologically sophisticated states remain obviously innocuous. Belgium, for example, can build nuclear weapons or chemical and biological warfare systems without working up a sweat, which is a striking contrast to the heroic exertions of Pakistan and Iraq, but the Belgians are extremely unlikely to invade or covertly make war upon anyone. The same is obviously true of a vast number of regimes. Iraq is dangerous because it has an expansionist and peculiarly vicious fascist regime, huge oil revenues, a sizable population, and a host of amoral weapons suppliers. These qualities are rarely found in so perfect a combination.

What, then, is to be done? If the problem is Iraq's regional military hegemony, we can either disarm Iraq or arm and organize its foes. Iraq's imported weapons are absolutely dependent on further imports of spare parts, as is the rudimentary Iraqi military-industrial base. This is an effective pressure point over the long run; very few Third World states can improvise an import-substitution scheme for jet engines and missile guidance systems. A resolute embargo on military exports would eventually degrade the efficiency of even a well-stocked Third World armed force below that of neighbors who retained access to First World imports. This is in fact what happened to Iran over the course of its war with Iraq: the Iranian air force started off with seventy-seven F-14 fighter aircraft and a store of Phoenix missiles. The aircraft were soon inoperable, and the missiles followed in their wake. In general, the most sophisticated systems are the first to collapse without foreign technical support.

Will Iraq's recent imports of technology and raw materials create a self-sustaining military-industrial base? Pessimists assert that Iraq can now make its own middle-range Scud B missiles and poison gas; fission bombs and longer-range ballistic missiles are said to be around the corner. I'm not so sure. Iraq will continue to require a host of critical imports: exotic machine tools; skilled

---

Fred Smoler teaches history and literature at Sarah Lawrence College. He is a contributor to The Nation *and a reviewer for the* British Observer.

labor; some strategic materials; some precursor chemicals (one key constituent of nerve gas, for example); very-high-speed switches for fission bombs; and special alloys, among other things. These imports arrive through the connivance of export-assistance ministries of other nations that routinely breach international embargoes and controls. If the Iraqis actually nerve-gas a few score thousand Westerners, this behavior may change. Effective export controls would be a new thing under the sun, and perhaps they will now be possible. But for this to happen, arguments about the sovereignty of Saddam's regime would have to be countered by hard facts about its savageries.

Disarming Iraq more quickly would require the destruction of many of its tanks and much of its air force, and many people would sleep more easily if its military industries are destroyed—which would entail the prior destruction of its air defenses. Most people think that this can be done with a series of air strikes. Some Americans and many more Iraqis would die, although by no means as many as in any general infantry or armor engagement. Air power may not be able to liberate Kuwait or coerce Saddam Hussein, but it can almost certainly blunt Iraq's offensive capacities. If Iraqi tanks, many of them now dug in, move out of their fortifications, our attacks will be all the more effective. Various threats and feints could presumably startle the Iraqis into motion. The alliance mobilized against Iraq could threaten the flanks of the huge deployment in Kuwait by maneuvers across a number of borders.

Can local balances of power, or balances of terror, be constructed to contain the most aggressive states? We've tried this. This "solution" consists of playing states off each other; when the Iraqis build up, for example, we hear arguments that we should look away while the Turks and Syrians do too. This is essentially the strategy that led to U.S. support for the Shah in the seventies and the Iraqis in the eighties. Its drawbacks should be obvious. Regional nuclear proliferation would be disastrous. Balances of terror are least technologically stable when they are least sophisticated; nuclear wars are much more "rational" when one actor has a dozen weapons and the other a score, provided that none of them are second-strike systems.

The conventional arming and organizing of a regional alliance to contain Iraq, however superficially attractive, may be hard to execute. Syria, an obvious mainstay of such an alliance, is a regime as nasty and possibly as expansionist as Iraq; Turkey seems unlikely to play; the Iranians have ambitions of their own in the Gulf; the Israelis are unacceptable as partners and the Gulf states are simply too weak, no matter how firmly allied and how well armed. A permanent Western garrison sizeable enough to strengthen the locals is unlikely to be popular at home or abroad. And a permanent arms embargo on the region is also unlikely.

What forces have created the arms proliferation crisis in the Middle East? The great arms-producing states have all felt compelled to export destabilizing weapons, so as to obtain their own economies of scale and drive down unit costs for domestic procurement. Third World importers thus have access to precisely the most destabilizing technology, for that technology is the most expensive and most in need of support via foreign sales and foreign research subsidies.

In the old Eastern Bloc, the arms industries were perhaps uniquely adept at producing goods that could bring in hard currency. Eastern Bloc weapons were sometimes competitive in quality or price, but even if they were not, they enjoyed unique marketing opportunities from occasional Western prudery (as Eastern Bloc arms supplies to Nasser after the 1956 Suez crisis demonstrated). The Eastern Bloc could also cash in on a Third World importer's desire for independence from Western arms suppliers, as India showed in its development of an arms industry.

The disincentives for export controls range across the globe. In the wake of domestic economic reforms, the Chinese military may come to depend on the hard currency it earns on its exports—hence its grossly irresponsible drive to export ballistic missiles (and its reputed openhandedness with nuclear technology to Pakistan). The drastically altered climate of the global arms trade further ensures that military industries—and especially strategic military industries that produce not only conventional arms but also computers, nuclear power, and aerospace technology—simply cannot function competitively without export-driven economies of scale. These last three sectors supply the goods that allow obnoxious or dangerous Third World regimes covertly to develop deliverable nuclear warheads and the systems to deliver them. But Iraq's aggression in the Gulf shows that the attempt to lower the unit cost of a radar, an air-defense missile, or an artillery tube is at least as likely to produce a war as is a gas centrifuge for concentrating fissile materials.

Can global balances of power solve the problem? In spite of its unpopularity, this approach may be the best bet. Saddam attacked the Kuwaitis because they were defenseless, and they were defenseless because they felt more endangered by the potential unrest that the presence of an allegedly infidel garrison of Westerners could provoke than by the prospect of Iraqi aggression. They seem to have been mistaken. They may learn from their mistake, or someone else—the Saudis, for example—may. People don't generally learn from mistakes, but

there is a remarkably strong historical correlation linking conspicuous wealth and military weakness to the losing end of conquest. The most bizarre thing about our era is people's willingness to dispute this correlation, which has prevailed for the last few millennia.

Most of the contributors to *Tikkun*'s recent debate over the Iraq crisis assume that U.S. military involvement is an enormously undesirable outcome, justified, if at all, only by a threat to Israel. The threat to Israel seems to me overstated. But the threat to the rest of the region seems to be real indeed, and quite beyond the ability of local powers to resist. The First and Second Worlds provided Iraq with the means to attack its neighbors and once Iran, its most aggrieved neighbor, sought to defend itself, the First World managed to preserve for Iraq many of the fruits of its aggression. Now Iraq has devoured another neighbor; others in the vicinity are as vulnerable and as rich, and Iraq thinks that most of them are part of the Pan-Arab nation.

Having provided Iraq with the means to exterminate rebellious portions of its own population and annex unwilling subjects to replace them, it does not seem too unfair for Western industrial powers to try to remedy the damage we have done. The industrial world armed Saddam. It should disarm him, unless it can somehow help his victims resist him. The U.S. is alone among the industrial powers in its ability to disarm Iraq.

It is difficult to imagine other effective solutions. Belief in the Arab Solution is no more unreasonable than belief in the tooth fairy. Belief in the long-run integrity of the embargo alone flies in the face of history. Progressives of an earlier generation faced these same hard truths. To oppose Hitler and Stalin equally, Orwell wrote, is to oppose rats and rat poison equally. And as his continental cousins used to observe, he who says A, says B. To equally oppose Iraq's aggression and the only plausible means of reversing it does not seem a useful way to close up the wound in the world.

Much has been said, and said truly, about the U.S.'s hypocrisy and bad faith in world affairs. Hypocrisy is famously the tribute vice pays to virtue. If President Bush wants to disarm Iraqi fascism after spending a decade covering up for it, I cannot understand why progressives should seek to stop him. The danger that he will team up with the other Western states and start bumping off militarist and expansionist fascist dictators on all quarters seems much exaggerated, but if so, more power to him. It will presumably keep him too busy to invade Caribbean flyspecks and wage campaigns of terror in Central America. □

ERIC ALTERMAN: CONGRESS'S FAILURE

Can anyone imagine being told in say, 1975, that within fifteen years, the United States Congress would be reprising its inglorious role as silent partner in an undeclared presidential war? Amazing as it sounds—and despite some grumbling from the Senate Armed Services Committee—Congress appears *once again* to be forfeiting its constitutionally mandated role as the sole governing body charged with the solemn responsibility of declaring war. And this without even a cold war to silence its critics. It is the Gulf of Tonkin, part II: a sequel shot in the sands of Arabia.

But of course the political epilogue of the Gulf story is that Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening—the Senate's sole dissenting voices on LBJ's disastrous resolution—were both defeated for re-election. Today, as always, most Congressmen are "more concerned with electoral survival than human survival," as one Democratic aide puts it. Apparently still in the grips of its Reagan-era paralysis, Congress has allowed the war party in President Bush's administration to define the terms of debate. Instead of challenging the fundamentals of the president's analysis, or simply asserting its legitimate war-making powers as defined in the Constitution, the Democratic Congress appears to be falling into a familiar holding pattern. The president resolves unilaterally to tackle a diplomatic problem by military means. Congressional leaders, unable to endorse the president's decision or articulate a coherent alternative, accept the president's worldview and then merely quibble with the means he has chosen to pursue it.

Republican members of Congress have predictably closed ranks behind Bush's military mobilization. With a few notable exceptions, such as Mark Hatfield (R-Oreg.), Republicans in both chambers are vying to outdo one another in displays of right-thinking jingoism, often implying that any debate about the president's actions would be somehow traitorous.

On the Democratic side of the aisle, reactions have been far more discordant. Initially, most of the voices discernible above the din belonged to House members who clamored for a military solution even more loudly than the president did. Democratic hawks were admirably unequivocal in announcing their enlistment into

---

Eric Alterman, a senior fellow of the World Policy Institute, is currently at work on a book on Washington pundits.

the Kuwait crusade. As Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) put it, America's response to the crisis would "determine the fate and future of the entire world, if we were to permit Saddam Hussein to get away with his brutal aggression." On the other side of the spectrum, a hard-core group of twenty-nine House members and three senators (Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, Hatfield, and Ted Kennedy) spoke up in opposition to the heavily UN-dependent resolutions Congress passed endorsing Bush's initial deployment to Saudi Arabia. Most Democrats, however, simply tried to stay out of trouble. They ducked Republican calls for a special session of Congress to debate the pros and cons of a declaration of war, and argued feebly that such a debate would either give Bush authority he did not yet have or signal to Hussein that Bush's threats of military retaliation were empty ones. No one wanted to be seen voting in favor of either premature war or unnecessary wimpery.

This situation remained largely unchanged through the 1990 elections. Two days afterward, Bush, virtually without any congressional consultation, announced his decision to deploy another two hundred thousand American troops to Saudi Arabia. This second deployment was mobilized not for deterrence but explicitly for an offensive war to chase Hussein out of Kuwait. The uneasy public reaction to the new moves served as a wake-up call for many Democrats, who suddenly realized that they were about to accept responsibility for what was rapidly becoming a widely mistrusted military adventure. Having failed to object to Bush's all-or-nothing definition of the problem, however, these Democrats were in no position to start questioning the fundamentals of a policy that made that definition the basis of a case for war. Instead, they questioned only the particulars of Bush's timing, claiming that the administration was not giving the UN-sponsored sanctions a chance to cripple the Iraqi economy and force Saddam's capitulation in a relatively peaceful manner. If and when these sanctions were deemed to have failed, however, war, for mainstream Democrats, remained the only viable option.

The key beak to read in this debate belonged to Georgia hawk, and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, Sam Nunn. Nunn works a kind of protection racket for liberal Democratic senators: when they are up for re-election, he comes to campaign for them in order to fend off allegations of pacifism and wimpiness from right-wing Republicans. They then mind their own business when Nunn decides how many hundreds of billions will make his friends in the Pentagon happy.

Nunn lay low for the early part of the crisis, but finally called hearings on the subject in late November. There, he mapped out the boundaries of what would henceforth constitute the safe middle ground (SMIG) for Democrats who wished to be considered "credible" and "responsible" by the nation's op-ed pages. In charting the SMIG, Nunn did not, of course, take issue with the idea of going to war to restore the Kuwaiti monarchy. "The question is not whether military action is justified. It is." That was the end of that.

But like all good Washington questions, Nunn's had no "easy answers," just "serious implications" requiring "careful consideration" and "further deliberation." In the meantime, Democratic senators looking for protection on both their left and right flanks donned the habits of Nunn. Democrats with national ambitions raised disturbing, but never fundamental, questions regarding the administration's policy. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) complained that Bush "abandoned a policy that was working for a policy of high-stakes bluffing" in the Gulf. Asked if he supported a decision to go to war over Kuwait, Senate majority leader George Mitchell refused to speculate in what he called "hypotheticals."

But in the House, where political ambitions are more widely dispersed, and party discipline is harder to come by, the scene was far more confusing. The loudest and earliest voices were those of the baby hawks: former Vietnam and Central America doves who grew talons at the mention of Saddam Hussein's name. Among their number were some of the most liberal members of the Democratic party. Nearly all were powerful supporters of the Israeli government and closely tied to AIPAC, the "pro-Israel lobby." AIPAC made it no secret that its client wished for an unnatural and premature end to Saddam's miserable life and would have liked to see the United States deliver the body Federal Express. Buried deep inside the original House resolution in support of the administration's first deployments is a patented AIPAC clause ensuring that whatever further arms go to Saudi Arabia, the United States would remain committed to Israel's military welfare. The administration's proposed $20 billion arms sale to the Saudis—the largest in world history—was thereafter pared down to reflect these concerns.

The AIPAC liberals spoke forcefully in support of the Bush administration's steady course but met privately to try to build support for an offensive war. At an October 26 breakfast hosted by the Saudi ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Stephen Solarz, Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), and Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) proposed a blue-ribbon committee to convince Americans that "war against Iraq may be inescapable and indeed necessary." One member, according to an Evans and Novak report, advised the Muslim prince to join forces with AIPAC to lobby for war. The group then settled on the idea of setting up a "citizen's committee" to bang the war drum loudly.

Such congressional war parties continued uninterrupted until the administration overplayed its hand with the new deployments. The sight of yet another two hundred thousand troops deployed for still-undefined goals agitated the doves to the point where prowar liberals in the House were suddenly treading water at best—and sometimes swimming upstream. Led by Berkeley firebrand Ron Dellums (D-Calif.), fifty-four Democratic representatives, along with Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), petitioned the U.S. Superior Court to prevent George Bush from going to war without a congressional declaration. Among the signatories were three Jewish members, Barbara Boxer, Tedd Weiss, and Barney Frank. All three have been generally supportive of AIPAC in the past but this time found themselves unable to follow Bush into the Kuwaiti desert.

Finally, at the end of November, congressional Democrats started to drill a few holes in Bush's wall of death. House majority leader Richard Gephardt broke loose from the Nunn fold long enough to announce that he would not support an offensive war without first giving the UN sanctions the chance to work. This view was seconded by two former heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Nunn's Armed Services Committee hearings the same day. Nunn himself issued a carefully worded criticism of Bush's impatience. The president now had a much tougher job on his hands. With pressure building from the steady stream of cold war hawks appearing before the Nunn committee—the vast majority endorsing the wait-and-see posture—along with a developing newspaper editorial consensus along those lines, Bush felt compelled to mollify his critics by sending Baker to Baghdad and inviting the Iraqi foreign minister to the White House.

Thus, as winter descended in Washington, and as the UN-mandated January 15 deadline approached, a curious chill settled over the Democratic opposition. On the one hand, they had won from the president what the opinion-making elite had deemed to be a significant political concession: they had forced Bush to prove that he had "gone the extra mile" to ensure peace before opting for war.

But while Congress and the pundit classes were busy congratulating themselves on their symbolic victory, Defense Secretary Richard Cheney was nevertheless explaining that Bush retained what the president considered to be his constitutional prerogative to declare war at any moment. "I do not believe," Cheney told the Armed Services Committee, "the president requires any additional authority from Congress."

After a full four months of reaction time, no one in the leadership of the Democratic party had yet addressed the fundamental question of whether the "liberation" of Kuwait was worth going to war over. To say that the United States should go to war to free Kuwait, without



first debating just what makes this goal worth at least thirty thousand American lives, is an unconscionable dereliction of the Congress's democratic responsibilities. Japan and Germany, far more dependent on Gulf oil than we are, and far more economically competitive, have taken a good hard look at the stakes and concluded that determining which antidemocratic tyrant rules Kuwait is not worth the sacrifice of a single citizen's life, and certainly not the $2 billion a month it costs to keep American soldiers sitting there. And yet even to raise the question in Congress—which is, after all, constitutionally entrusted with responsibility for these decisions—during the first four months of the crisis, was to be stigmatized as a radical, an appeaser, or worse.

The obvious solution to the Democrats' dilemma over whether to declare war would have been for the Democratic leadership to call a special session of both houses for the specific purpose of passing a resolution that simply affirmed this inarguable constitutional prerogative. This could have prevented Bush from starting a war, Gulf of Tonkin style, while retaining for Congress the option of forcing Saddam out of Kuwait if and when it determined this was necessary. Democratic leaders considered this course at the end of November, then threw in the towel when Bush announced Baker's mission to Baghdad.

Cynics such as myself may still be proven wrong. By the time this article appears, Baker may have negotiated the peaceful withdrawal of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and defused the entire crisis. Needless to say, I would be thrilled with such an outcome. But if, as appears more likely, Bush has merely offered Baker's trip as a symbolic gesture to salve congressional consciences, then the cowardice of the Democratic party in refusing to confront the president, both on constitutional and substantive grounds, will stand as one of the great moral and political failures in its history. The last such failure killed more than fifty-seven thousand Americans and millions more Indochinese. □

ROUNDTABLE: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Continuing our discussion of U.S. policy toward Iraq, we conducted a telephone roundtable to explore different positions in the liberal-progressive camp. Barbara Ehrenreich was national co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, and is the author of The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes on a Decade of Greed *(Pantheon, 1990). Mitchell Cohen is co-editor of* Dissent *and author of* Zion and State *(Basil Blackwell, 1987). Milton Viorst is a contributing editor of* Tikkun *and a Middle East correspondent for* The New Yorker. *Stephen Rosenfeld is deputy Editorial Page editor of the* Washington Post.

TIKKUN: What should the U.S. policy be in the Gulf in 1991?

Viorst: President Bush has violated the first rule of international order by refusing to negotiate—this is a stance that the U.S. and the world will come to regret. The U.S. should say to Saddam, "Look, we recognize that this is a complex situation. We are going to have a representative in Geneva on such and such a date, let's have lunch." Or maybe we should reassign our ambassador back to the post in Iraq to have someone who could begin some discussions. Our goal should be to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait under terms that both sides can live with, and that will mean negotiating about the disputed islands and oil fields.

It's also important to get an Arab League presence or some Arab authority into this process, so that the outcome does not appear to be a settlement imposed by outsiders. Iraq and Kuwait ought to be put into a room and told to solve their financial differences over the question of oil prices, and we ought to hope that Kuwait would make some concessions over the islands—perhaps a fifty-year lease or some sort of face-saving arrangement.

Rosenfeld: The first goal of American policy should be to get Iraq out of Kuwait in accord with the UN resolutions, after which Iraq can negotiate with Kuwait about the disputed islands and oil prices. This can be accomplished by continuing the economic boycott and political isolation, and building up military pressure. The UN resolution authorizing the use of force by January 15th is a useful sort of pressure so that Saddam understands that the alternative to the workings of an economic boycott might be an international military assault with the United States carrying the brunt—so that Saddam understands more clearly than he probably has to date what alternatives he faces. These time limitations do not require that we *act* on January 15th—there will remain plenty of time to try alternative roads, though at the end of some time period military action will have to be given serious consideration.

If you are contemplating military operations you can do many things. You don't have to send your big bombers and opt for the Armageddon option on the first day. You could take symbolic actions for openers, like creating sonic booms over Baghdad, dropping a bomb a day for three days, etc. There could be graduated applications of military power, if other alternatives were failing.

Cohen: The end of the Reagan administration and the Bush policy have created circumstances in which there are only bad options. There are three basic questions:

1) Does Saddam Hussein pose a problem that needs to be stopped? I think the answer here is yes, given the information we have from the past of his regime, including his starting an eight-year war with Iran costing a million lives, his seizure of Kuwait, his use of chemical weapons in what were virtually genocidal attacks on the Kurds. He has murdered not only those who oppose him but virtually everyone who has reached an agreement with him. He reached agreements with Iran and with the Kurds when he felt weak, then later turned on the Iranians and Kurds when he felt stronger. He reached an agreement with the Iraqi Communists when he felt he needed them, only to turn on them later. As a pattern of political and diplomatic behavior, this doesn't give us much reason to have confidence in any agreement he makes under conditions of diplomatic pressure. He has an agenda of domination over the Gulf, and the type of weapons he is seeking—ranging from nuclear to chemical and biological—are extremely dangerous to regional and world peace. So his actions need to be fettered in some way.

2) Can this be accomplished with sanctions or an embargo? It would be by far the best path, but given all that we know about his past fortitude in his war with Iran there is little reason to believe that an embargo will work.

3) Should we use force? That may ultimately be necessary, though it should be done in a multinational context, with congressional approval, without William Safire's war whoops, and only with narrow goals that should preclude a full-scale invasion of Iraq. Preferably any use of force would be primarily air force. There is a real danger of this war spreading, but I'm more concerned that we might face a similar set of circumstances sometime down the line with Saddam having a more lethal arsenal than he has now. So I think we may have to act to eliminate his chemical, biological, and possible future nuclear military capacities, given our understanding of his entire pattern of behavior.

Ehrenreich: There's no way to get what I want to see happen without George Bush losing considerable face. American policy should have been to let the UN handle this in a really multinational way. The only way to get back to anything like that is for the U.S. to have a military presence there no larger than that of any other country—and that would require the U.S. reducing our troop strength rather dramatically. I'm going to do my best to make that happen.

I don't think that this is a problem for *us*. I don't accept that the U.S. should be in this role, as the cop, as the overseer. I say this in part as a mother of an eighteen-year-old son. I cannot see this is worth my son's life or my daughter's life or the lives of any of those four hundred thousand American service personnel whose lives will be at risk.

Tikkun: If it were being done multilaterally through the UN in the way that you'd like to see, what should the UN be pushing for?

Ehrenreich: Well, we should try the embargo. Our initial idea was to protect Saudi Arabia. I have my doubts about how much we should be wanting to protect that particular society, but leaving that aside, if we *did* accomplish that goal, so we could say "We won" and go home. But now let's let the embargo work—there was no reason to believe that it would be effective in just a couple of months.

Cohen: It would certainly be better if this whole thing had been under UN auspices. But it is doubtful that when action was needed to stop Saddam in August the UN could have quickly gotten its military act together. And I've yet to be persuaded that an economic boycott can succeed.

Ehrenreich: Give it a chance.

Cohen: Give it a chance for how long? If we wait too long, the danger is that the coalition will break down and he can build up a more lethal military apparatus.

Tikkun: Is the purpose of the embargo to get him to leave Kuwait or to stop him from building this kind of arsenal?

Ehrenreich: Well, what should it be? I don't see that we have any legitimate purpose there more than that of any other nation.

Viorst: I'm a little upset that people now seem to be saying that it should be up to the UN to decide whether we go to war. Meanwhile, France and Japan and Germany have at least as much at stake as we do, whether we reduce this whole thing to oil or to the issue of international order. But the only people making any significant contribution are the British. So we have UN backing, but this may be more because of things that Bush is offering to Security Council countries. I suspect that Bush has offered Gorbachev a free hand in the Baltic states and the Chinese a free hand in dealing with dissidents. That's how we may be getting this UN support, and so the situation is really not some welling up of international indignation and determination to stop Saddam, even in the Security Council, much less the General Assembly. It's not that all these countries have come to realize how vital this whole struggle is, but rather that they are *willing* to let our people be killed fighting for them. I find this whole thing grotesque.

Tikkun: If these other countries are *not* involved, *should* they be?

Viorst: I certainly believe in a Roosevelt view of what the UN should be—there is something to be said for a genuine UN effort at international peace-keeping. I don't think that what's happening now bears much resemblance to that idealistic goal.

Rosenfeld: I remember a time not so long ago when people were worried that Bush was going to rush impetuously into war. But Bush went to the UN rather than taking unilateral action. If he engaged in some arm twisting, that's how that kind of an arena works. But he did go to that arena. You can't have it *both ways:* you can't both attack the U.S. for not going to the UN, and attack the UN if, when the U.S. does go there, the UN then actually agrees with the U.S.

Viorst: I'd prefer that we go to the UN, sure. But we are not ending up with real international support, only with the other countries simply allowing the U.S. to pursue its own policy under UN cover, with the U.S. taking all the risks. When boys begin to die in the desert, they are not going to be French or Japanese—99 percent of them are going to be American kids.

Tikkun: Imagine that the UN was responding in a way that you think would indicate real support. Would any struggle in this region be legitimate at this time on the part of any group of nations?

Ehrenreich: Shouldn't something be done about the wives of servicemen who have to go on welfare when the welfare levels are wildly inadequate? Why should I have to respond to the problem in the Gulf when there are so many other pressing problems closer to home? It seems

to me, and I don't think I'm being at all paranoid, that the Gulf crisis might have been a distraction from the S&L crisis, the recession, etcetera.

Cohen: What's your basis for thinking that?

Ehrenreich: We had no prior concern about Saddam. And then there's the interesting information that our ambassador, on the eve of the invasion, more or less said "Go ahead." In international relations, there are bad guys all over the world ... so what are we making this fuss about?

Tikkun: Does concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons give any special immediacy to the problem with Saddam?

Viorst: Yes, but arms races in the Middle East feed upon each other. One of the concerns of the diplomacy that I advocate is an international conference at which this arms question could be taken up, but here I think we have to realize that Israel and Iraq are in the same boat. Such a conference might well fail, but it might fail just as much because *our* client state, Israel, was opposed to any comprehensive settlement as because of resistance from Saddam. But if it fails, I don't see the appropriate response being "Let's go in and bomb the hell out of them." This sounds to me like those who wanted to take preventive strikes against the Russians in the early days of the cold war. We created a system of deterrence in the absence of an agreement with the Soviet Union, and a system of deterrence might also work in the Middle East. This whole notion of going to war to destroy Iraq is extremely dubious.

Cohen: Imagine if, at the end of the day of this crisis, Saddam Hussein remains strong and on his feet with his arsenal intact. Such an outcome would be a major blow to Israeli doves. Their ability to argue for territorial compromise with the Palestinians will be severely limited. Likud and much of the Israeli center as well will feel that they would have to be crazy to make territorial compromises while Saddam remains strong and the Palestinians remain connected to him. Shamir doesn't want to make those compromises anyway, but that doesn't change the fact that this kind of an outcome would greatly increase his ability to convince those in the middle. Nor is it an entirely crazy argument.

Ehrenreich: There are more pacific ways to encourage Israeli doves besides bombing Iraq.

Tikkun: Except that a recent poll reported in the *New York Times* indicates that the *only* reason a majority of Americans would support a military intervention in Iraq would be to stop Iraq from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Rosenfeld: I don't pay much attention to polls of that sort. I don't see the American population supporting an all-out struggle in Iraq for the sake of stopping nuclear proliferation.

Tikkun: What reactions do you have to the proposal to *first,* before any military strike, put our energy into trying to create an international conference in which the Israeli–Palestinian issue as well as the Kuwait issue would be on the table?

Rosenfeld: Before this Kuwait issue, it seemed to me as if Bush was beginning to move into second gear on the Israeli–Palestinian front; he had already given it more attention in his first two years than Ronald Reagan had in his entire eight years. It seems plausible to me to believe that the Iraqi move into Kuwait interrupted that. Now there are further complications. I don't see any sentiment in Washington for trying to get the Israeli–

New England Regional *Tikkun* Mini-Conference

at Boston University Hillel

Benefit Poetry/Fiction Reading, 7 p.m.
February 9 with *Tikkun* poetry editor Marge Piercy, Ira Wood, Robert Pinsky, and *Tikkun* fiction editor Marcie Hershman.
Cost: $12.

Mini-Conference: February 10, 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Discussion of Iraq, Israel, and the Peace Movement, and the Politics of Racial Identity with *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner and contributing editor Gary Peller (author of the special focus in this issue of the magazine).
Cost: $25 before February 1. $35 after February 1. Send check or Visa/Mastercard information to:
Tikkun, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619
(415) 482-0805.

Tikkun Magazine sponsors a Northeast Conference of PROGRESSIVE JEWISH STUDENTS

at Harvard University February 9–10

- **Michael Lerner** on Iraq, the Middle East, and the Conflicts Progressive Jewish Students Face on Campus
- **Rabbi Sheila Weinberg** on Feminism and Judaism
- **Martha Ackelsberg** on Gays, Lesbians, and the Jewish Community
- **Gary Peller** and **Sherry Brown** on Blacks and Jews

Registration: $12. Send check to *Tikkun,* c/o Daniel Baer, Quincy House 614, Cambridge, MA 02138
More information: Daniel Baer (617) 493-3145
Carolyn Cohen (401) 272-2845

Palestinian issue dealt with before the Iraqi presence in Kuwait has been dealt with.

Tikkun: What about those who think that the only way we actually *could* deal with the Iraqi situation is to put all the regional issues on the table for a comprehensive settlement?

Rosenfeld: Yes, there are those who would argue for that—you could put everything on the table, the Kurds, the Palestinians, Kuwait, Lebanon. But there will be so much on the table that nothing really gets dealt with.

Cohen: I think that the way the Kurds get sloughed off is appalling—their national aspirations, their physical safety.

Viorst: The objective in the Middle East is to defuse the world's last remaining powder keg. I understand why people think that nuclear proliferation is an important issue. I see that proliferation as a consequence of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Then, in our leisure, we deal with these other important local conflicts. Dealing with Saddam would be much easier if it were done in the context of solving larger regional conflicts.

Cohen: If Israel didn't exist Saddam Hussein would still be developing his nuclear weapons.

Viorst: There's a whole disequilibrium in the region as a result of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. What Israel has done is to continue to create an atmosphere of instability.

Tikkun: It seems implausible to blame Israel for Iraq's aggression in relationship to Iran or to the Kurds or to Kuwait.

Viorst: I'm not blaming Israel. There might have been a chance to create a more stable Middle East after the end of the Iran–Iraq war. One of the reasons that this did not happen is that there was no progress on the Israeli front.

Cohen: Saddam has had an agenda that he has been very frank about, tied to the ideology of his party, that preceded the Iran–Iraq war: the agenda of dominating the Arab world.

Viorst: I'm concerned about Saddam also. I just don't think it reasonable to try to prevent some future war with Saddam by starting a war now.

Ehrenreich: And you can't start with Bush's position of no negotiations.

Tikkun: If there were some possibility of negotiations, would you agree if the condition of such negotiations was that all issues, not just withdrawal from Kuwait, would be on the agenda?

Rosenfeld: Well, you understand, I'm sure, that his actual position is quite opposite. He wants all the regional issues on the agenda, but he doesn't want to have to leave Kuwait.

I think we are already now in a bargaining context and that we know Saddam's opening position: all the regional issues should be solved on his terms, and then he will consider something on Kuwait.

Viorst: How about thinking of it as the opening bargaining salvo?

Rosenfeld: I accept that. It's out there, and no one would possibly accept it, but it is an opening bargaining position. The Americans also have an opening bargaining position—we won't talk about anything on your mind till what's on our mind is taken care of to our satisfaction. Meanwhile, there are various other interlocutors in motion, particularly the Soviet Union, but also the French, the Secretary General, and other forces.

Saddam keeps saying he wants to "dialogue" with the U.S. He may want to discuss this particular issue, or he may feel that it is enhancing his prestige just to draw the United States into this discussion. Saddam is acting as though this is going to be a very long and protracted struggle. He is building his support system this way, and he's building his negotiating strategy in that way. He is acting as though he has time on his side; that he has the stamina for a long struggle and the U.S. does not. Bush played into this, unfortunately, when he said the other day, "We are getting tired of the status quo." Bush may be getting tired of the status quo, but I think it is very foolish to advertise his impatience. That merely gives Saddam incentive to lie back and wait for pressures to build on Bush. I hope that when Saddam indicates he is interested in dialogue that he will be pressed to answer the question, "Saddam, what would you be willing to give up to bring about this dialogue with the U.S.?" Over time, I hope that these dialogues will become possible.

I also believe that the Congress should give Bush some support for using the military option as a mechanism for pressure on Iraq, by endorsing the UN resolution that sets a date after which it would be appropriate to use force.

Viorst: The Security Council has a lot less at stake than the Congress of the U.S. The Security Council may find it quite easy to send our troops to war.



Ehrenreich: I will not be that impressed with congressional support for a resolution backing the potential use of force. I don't think that will persuade a large section of the U.S. population, myself included. We have a sickening feeling that we are being trapped by circumstances created, first by Saddam, then by George Bush, and that the events have a momentum beyond our control, so that now we hear that there's no getting out of it once we have so many troops there.

There's another disturbing aspect of this situation: the class and race composition of the people in our army who would fight and die in any potential war. I'm not convinced that Congress has any greater personal stake in this than the Security Council of the UN. Only two people in Congress have sons or daughters in Saudi Arabia.

Tikkun: One objection that is often raised to the liberal and progressive forces is that we naively seem to think that the world is made up of rational actors with basically good intentions who will act in reasonable ways. So we have nothing really to offer the world when a genuinely evil force like Saddam Hussein comes along.

Ehrenreich: I've never heard such a criticism of the Left. Perhaps that criticism has been made of *Tikkun,* but not of the Left. As a responsible radical, I believe our first responsibility is toward the evil close to home, and stopping that. In any event, I'm more worried in the long run about the belligerence of George Bush than of Saddam Hussein.

I find myself becoming more of an isolationist, but in any event there are structures of international responsibility for the enforcement of international law that *this* government has flouted in the past, especially around Nicaragua (and we were so judged by the World Court). The time has just begun when the UN could work, now that the cold war is over. This is the moment when peace could be breaking out. This is the moment when the U.S. and the Soviet Union could work together. There are so many opportunities. So we should reject this helpless and fatalistic attitude toward war.

I'm really upset and angry about this, and scared. I hope George Bush is impressed by the size of the developing antiwar movement. It took two years of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam till there was a reaction this size; it took two months this time around. I've never seen anything like this. The number of young people who are resisting going over there, the organization of parents of service people ... all this is going on *very* rapidly ... all this should be a warning that the American people are no more interested in having a war than the Japanese or the French people.

The reason the French and the Japanese are not so involved is that this really isn't such a big deal. This isn't the first time a small country has been invaded; this isn't the first "mad dog" dictator in the world. Are we going to go into this kind of hyperreaction every time a bully like this appears?

Viorst: Twenty years from now if Kuwait never appeared in our minds, I don't think we would be terribly upset about that. There are too many instances of injustice ... the U.S. swallowing up large sections of Mexico, Prussia unifying Germany ... Italy doing the same thing ... these are historical phenomena that George Bush presumes to interrupt, with a little bit of money and manipulation and a use of our forces. We've made no effort to find out what the Iraqis need, to find out what this is all about. What we know is that we woke up one morning and we heard George Bush say, "Saddam, if you don't do this, I'll blow you up." We've started this, and it's up to us to end it; the only way we'll stop it is to let the other side know that we have some interest in finding a way to negotiate some end to it. If it turns out that there really is no way out, *then* we start thinking about war. But war became the first option, not the last one, and this is an outrageous reversal of priorities in my judgment.

Twenty years from now this whole thing may look like a very insignificant incident in history. The disappearance of Kuwait would *not* be one of the great tragedies of history.

Rosenfeld: Would you say that the disappearance of Israel would not be one of the great tragedies?

Viorst: I would say that the disappearance of Israel *would* be one of the great historical tragedies.

Rosenfeld: How do you distinguish between those countries whose disappearance would be a tragedy and those whose disappearance would not be a tragedy?

Viorst: There's a difference in the historical justification of these countries, since Kuwait was set up by British imperialism.

Furthermore, people who are willing to fight and die for their country have greater legitimacy than those who run with the first shot. The Kuwaitis were not willing to fight for their country, and that is a relevant fact. I have no doubt about the legitimacy of the nationhood that Israel represents, and part of that is the willingness of Israelis to fight and die for their national existence.

Cohen: There was a tribal confederation in the eighteenth century called the Azaina that settled in the area that is now Kuwait, and they've been ruled by the same family, the Al Sabah family, till today. In the nineteenth century, because they were afraid of the Ottomans swallowing them up, they turned to the British, and the British made them a protectorate from 1899 to 1961. That same family and that same tribe have been there for the past two centuries governing themselves. To say that it's just a creation of British imperialism is not accurate.

Iraq, on the other hand, brings together three separate provinces of the Ottoman empire (Basra, Baghdad, and Mousul). Those three were put together and became Iraq under a British mandate after World War I.

Viorst: Iraq has demonstrated its own national identity by its willingness to fight together in Iran.

Tikkun: Returning to the Israeli–Palestinian issue for a moment, I want to ask if you have any sense of how the chances for peace will be affected by the current struggle.

Rosenfeld: Before the invasion of Kuwait, I tended to think of the Palestinian–Israeli issue as a separate issue from other regional issues; but now I'm more inclined to accept the Israeli contention that there must be a two-tiered focus for negotiations—one with Israeli–Palestinian issues, the other with Israeli–Arab state issues. States like Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia are going to have to enter into a peace process. The way to soften the hawks and quiet their legitimate security anxieties in the context where Iraq has made these horrendous threats against Israel is to draw some of the Arab states into a negotiation with Israel about peace. Multilêvel negotiations must take place.

Tikkun: Some Israeli doves believe that the reason that Israel is putting forward the notion that a settlement with the Palestinians must be accompanied by settlement with the Arab states is merely because the hard-liners are sure that the Arabs would never agree to a settlement. If progress were possible, these doves believe, the Israeli Right would try to find some other way to torpedo it. If an arrangement with the Palestinians were dependent on Saddam Hussein and Assad, nothing would happen.

Rosenfeld: Arab state instransigence is the opening position. Egypt was intransigent until it became ready to negotiate. All the Arab countries except for the worst of the rejectionists have at various times uttered formulaic words that indicated a willingness to negotiate. What is needed is a bargaining context. I'll make an imprudent prediction: this conflict has shed a blinding light on all the issues in the region, so that once we get through this conflict with Saddam Hussein I think we may enter a period of great ferment and creativity and changes in the way people look at each other and how states deal with each other. This is what happened after the 1973 Yom Kippur war, and in a few years Israel and Egypt were ready to develop a new relationship. With the help of outside forces—and here I differ profoundly with Barbara Ehrenreich's philosophical isolationism—I think we will have a better context for peace than we've ever had before in the Middle East.

Viorst: Well, the official Iraqi position is that it would agree to any peace arrangement that the Palestinians agreed to. We can laugh it off if we like, but why laugh it off—why not test it out? The Israeli–Palestinian issue represents something huge in the Arab psyche, and if that can be cleared away I think that the prospects of settling up with the Arab world generally become relatively simple, whether that's done with an international conference, or many conferences, or by one-to-one negotiations between states.

Cohen: One final reflection: Progressive forces are appropriately anti-interventionist in general. But I'm against anti-interventionism collapsing into a simplistic isolationism that ends up with the Left being in the same camp with Patrick Buchanan. □

Home

Gary Pacernick

I have no Jerusalem.
Even my Russia weeping but strong
Image of my prophetic grandfather is gone
America was my sullen father.
A poor salesman, he took me as far
As he could, then left me
Standing at the edge of space.
Seeing no candles but stars
I turned back to the earth
My mother calling my name.

Gary Pacernick is the author of Memory and Fire: Ten American Jewish Poets, *and of a collection of poems,* The Jewish Poems *(both Peter Lang Publications, 1989).*

Race Against Integration

Gary Peller

Since its inception, *Tikkun* has questioned traditional liberal and progressive approaches to political and social issues. We have argued that the focus on the achievement of individual rights and the distribution of governmental benefits is too narrow. This focus neglects the political implications of people's emotional lives, the relevance of religious belief and spiritual insight to public life, the authentic need people have for a moral vision to inspire community action, as well as the reigning structure of psychic alienation and social passivity that helps to make transformation seem impossible.

This ongoing reconsideration of the liberal world view is particularly pertinent to issues of *racial* politics and cultural identity. Liberal-progressive ideology as we know it assumed its contemporary form in the midst of, and largely as a response to, the mass movements by Blacks during the 1960s. And the national embrace of "civil rights" most vividly reflects the limitations of the liberal-progressive tradition that we have inherited. I want to discuss the dominant ways in which race relations have been understood, and to speculate about the cultural dynamics that informed the group alliances and ideologies that have been part of the institutionalization of the civil rights movement in American culture.

Part of this story is of special relevance to progressive Jews. Everyone agrees that, after years of alliance, relations between Blacks and Jews have been strained for at least two decades. Of course, when we publicly discuss these matters (usually only at conference panels entitled "Blacks and Jews"), there is general proclamation of our shared interests and historic alliances, and of a common history of persecution and discrimination. There are promises to try to have more dialogue, to try to educate our respective communities about each other, to rebuild bridges of trust, and there is a lot of applause.

But even these events occur against a background of uneasiness. Progressive Jews are often embarrassed by the fact that Jews are well-represented among the architects of neoconservative ideology, and loudly champion its aggressive opposition to racial affirmative action. Even though we know they constitute a small minority of Jewish opinion, we nevertheless have a vague guilt that the very existence of this powerful cadre of neoconservative Jews means that we as a community have let Blacks down. And my sense is that progressive Blacks are similarly embarrassed about the anti-Semitism of some highly visible Black leaders, symbolized by Jesse Jackson's "Hymietown" slip. Progressives among Blacks and Jews genuinely aspire to let go of all this baggage, to recover the spiritual strength and political power of the moral bonds historically uniting Blacks and Jews.

But also, I think, a sense of artificiality haunts these efforts—a feeling that deeper conflicts persist, conflicts that the proclamations of alliance and coalition work to repress. This lingering sense of distrust has gathered, over time, around specific issues—affirmative action, Jewish ambivalence about the social movement that Jesse Jackson spearheaded for a time, and the critique of Israel by Blacks that often seems to go beyond opposition to Israel's current right-wing regime, and to call into question Israel's right to exist at all. Relations with progressive Blacks renew the feeling that we have struggled with off and on in the Left: that the implicit condition for alliances with gentiles has been the suppression of our identity as Jews in general, and as Zionists in particular. And Blacks, I believe, have a corresponding background suspicion that the economic success of Jews means identification with the dominant power structure in America. The climate of mutual suspicion leaves Blacks surmising that Jews have the same racism against Blacks that Jews suspect on the part of Blacks against Jews.

Arriving at any particular "real" explanation of the strains between progressive Jews and Blacks is probably impossible; the issues are just too complex to get at anything like the full story in these few pages. But I do want to highlight an important feature of the current situation that has hardly been discussed at all: its partial grounding in the divergent ways that progressives in the two communities have come to understand the role of cultural identity in our general conceptions of politics, justice, and power.

As I see it, present tensions between progressive Jews and Blacks can be traced back to the racial politics of the 1960s. Today's dominant discourse about race and cultural identity took shape in the late 1960s and early 1970s, emerging out of a series of intense clashes between white supremacists, Black nationalists, and a coalition of white and Black integrationists. Through their alliance with both the wider white progressive

Gary Peller is a professor of law at Georgetown University. This essay is adapted from a longer study, "Race Consciousness," which appeared in the Duke Law Journal.

community and Black moderates, Jews played an important role in defining and helping to institutionalize the particular liberal ideology about race that would come to define common sense on racial and ethnic issues an ideology that I call "integrationism." Integrationism identifies racial oppression in the social structure of prejudice and stereotype based on skin color, and equates progress with transcending a racial consciousness about the world. This approach fits well with the general progressive worldview: its interpretation of racism as a form of irrational discrimination combines the classic liberal faith in reason and enlightenment together with the egalitarian values that progressives have always stood for. But the incorporation of the civil rights struggle into mainstream American culture through integrationism's benediction as the official dogma of racial enlightenment also involved a tacit cultural compromise. Along with suppressing white racism —the widely celebrated aim of civil rights reform—the dominant conception of racial justice required that Black nationalists be equated with white racists. Integrationists demanded that race consciousness on the part of either whites or Blacks be repudiated as an affront to the good sense of enlightened Americans. Thus, to the extent that they insisted on seeing politics through the prism of racial identity, Black nationalist leaders such as Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the activists of the Black Panther Party all became, from the integrationist perspective, reverse racists, or merely angry stock figures of widespread Black frustration with the slow pace of civil rights reform. For whites, being progressive and enlightened meant not having any racial consciousness whatsoever. The ideal instead was to be "color-blind" toward people who "just happen to be Black" (even while allowing a limited exception for affirmative action to remedy past racial discrimination and the current disparities of opportunity deemed its consequence). But while white supporters of integration seemed progressive next to white supremacists, integration came under attack by both the radical Left and by older accommodationists for whom it represented the destruction of Black community life. In the Black community—at least by the late 1960s—integrationism represented a moderate, centrist politics.

What was at stake in this sixties racial discourse? What motivated the resolution of racial conflict in the terms on which it proceeded? I believe that integrationism's place of prestige in white progressive civil rights thinking, and the specific universalist imagery of the integrationist vision, emerged out of a complex psycho-cultural matrix: liberal, universalist ideas of racial justice—and the correlate perception of race as an accidental attribute, as mere skin color—satisfied a kind of "culture envy" for whites in general. Liberal whites covertly believed that Black culture was richer, more earthy, musical, passionate, sexual, and rhythmic than their own. At the same time, they felt guilty about any such belief, since it seemed indistinguishable from the malign caricatures of Black difference that white supremacists circulated. The extreme denunciations of the "Black Power" movement in 1966, and the near-total rejection of Black nationalism in the white community, grew in part out of the anxiety that nationalist assertions of racial difference produced in whites who had spent tremendous energy struggling against the ideology of white supremacy.

Progressive Jews formed an important subset of this white liberal reaction. But for us, these questions were highly charged. Racial identity brought back into consciousness what we as a group had tried to repress: our own shame about Jewish assimilation, and about our compromises with secular American culture. The discourse of "civil rights"—with its connotations of universalist reason and impartial justice—helped mediate this anxiety by translating the everyday culture of public and institutional life into something ethnically neutral and spiritually secular. This image of civil rights helped to symbolically deny that assimilation was even at issue either in Black participation in racial integration or in Jewish participation in mainstream American life.

* * *

> "Integration" as a goal speaks to the problem of Blackness not only in an unrealistic way but also in a despicable way. It is based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, Black people must move into a white neighborhood, or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both Black and white, the idea that "white" is automatically superior and "Black" is by definition inferior. For this reason, "integration" is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy.... The goal is to build and strengthen the Black community.... "Integration" also means that Black people must give up their identity, deny their heritage.... The fact is that integration, as traditionally articulated, would abolish the Black community. The fact is that what must be abolished is not the Black community but the dependent colonial status that has been inflicted on it.
>
> —Stokely Carmichael, 1967

Today the story of the civil rights struggle is commonly told in linear fashion, as if racial progress followed a steady evolution from an ignorant time when race was taken to signify real and meaningful differences between people, to the present

enlightened time, when race is properly understood not to make a difference except as a vestige of an unfortunate historical oppression or as a vague and largely privatized "ethnic heritage." But the progress from the racial caste system of American slavery to the widespread acceptance of integration and the goal of transcending race consciousness was neither linear nor inevitable. Our contemporary image of integration as the inevitable means to racial justice reflects the institutionalization of a *particular* understanding of racism, and the marginalization not only of white supremacists, but also of Black nationalists such as Malcolm X.

At one time, the ideal of racial integration helped inspire a powerful, spiritually based social resistance movement that threatened to destabilize status-quo American institutions in profound ways. Under the banner of integrationism, hundreds of thousands of people mobilized to challenge the political, economic, and cultural power relations in communities across the country by employing confrontation tactics of mass protest, economic boycott, civil disobedience, and strikes.

But today racial integration is neither controversial nor threatening. Conservatives and liberals argue over how widely to enforce integrationist norms—and thus the issue of affirmative action has captured the entire debate. But this constant and repetitive struggle over implementation obscures a critical fact: the entire argument is waged within the confines of a *shared* set of beliefs that comprehend racism as a form of "discrimination." Civil rights itself has been "integrated" into the dominant culture's discourse.

While nothing intrinsic to the idea of racial integration demands it be understood in the way I describe it, integrationism acquired this particular meaning during the 1960s and 1970s, when it came to define our sense both of what racism is, and what constitutes the proper means to overcome it. Integrationism should thus be understood as a set of beliefs that shape the mainstream ideology of race reform. The concepts of prejudice, discrimination, and segregation are the key elements of this ideology. Each represents a different aspect of what is seen as the core of racism—the distortion of reason by myth and ignorance.

For integrationists, racism is rooted in consciousness, in the cognitive process that attributes social significance to the arbitrary fact of skin color. The mental side of racism is represented as either "prejudice," the prejudging of a person according to mythological stereotypes, or as "bias," the process of being influenced by subjective factors. The key image here is of irrationality —prejudice obscures the work of reason by clouding perception with beliefs rooted in superstition. Such irrationalism finds its most classic expression in the familiar myths of white supremacy, which assert natural, biological differences between Blacks and whites: the familiar identification of whites with intelligence, industriousness, and piety, and the corresponding association of Blacks with dullness, laziness, and lustfulness. The ignorance represented by racism is to be corrected by knowledge, gleaned from actual interracial experience rather from than the mythologies of stereotype.

In integrationist ideology, racism achieves a social form when the prejudice of consciousness is translated into practice. Here racism becomes "discrimination," the disparate treatment of whites and Blacks justified by the irrational attribution of difference. And the practice of discrimination in systematic form is segregation, a complete structure of Southern racial apartheid. Just as "prejudice" is implicitly contrasted with knowledge undistorted by myth, here discrimination is contrasted with neutrality, the social practice of equal treatment.

The solution to segregation, then, is integration, carefully counterposed to racism in each realm where racism has appeared. At the level of consciousness, integration means overcoming prejudice based on race. Following the logic of integrationist ideology, people understand themselves as possible racists to the extent they carry around irrational images of people based on skin color. The ideal is to transcend group stereotypes in favor of treating people as individuals. James Farmer tells a story that reveals the extreme form the affliction of color-blindness could take in the 1960s. When a white CORE worker was mugged in her apartment, she described the assailant to police in great detail, including his height, weight, dental structure, and clothing, but she didn't mention he was Black "for fear of indicating prejudice."

At the level of practice, the integrationists' cure for discrimination is equal treatment according to neutral norms. And at the institutional level, integrationism obviously means an end to the social system of racial segregation. In any event, integrationists believed the two reforms would go hand in hand. Once neutrality replaced discrimination, equal opportunity would lead to integrated institutions; experience in integrated institutions would, in turn, replace the ignorance that underlies the myths of racist consciousness with the knowledge of actual contact. This helps to explain the initial focus of integrationists on public education. Once children attended integrated schools, they would learn the truth about each other before they came to believe stereotypes rooted in ignorance, and they would have equal opportunity in American social life.

The integrationists' analysis of white racism claims that racists "essentialize" a tie between race and particular social characteristics. Integrationists are committed to the view that race should make no difference between people. In its most extreme form, integrationism

looks fondly toward the day when contact between different groups in society will ensure that not only race, but all "ethnic identity will become a thing of the past," in the words of one 1960s sociologist. A commitment to a form of universalism, and an association of universalism with truth and particularism with ignorance, form the infrastructure of integrationism as it has been institutionalized in American culture. This universalism is the common theme of the distinctions between reason and prejudice, objectivity and bias, neutrality and discrimination, integration and segregation. Each of these dichotomies is composed of a realm of impersonality contrasted with a realm where subjective bias and particularity would reign.



Within this framework, controversy revolves around the categorization of a particular social practice as either rational and neutral, or irrational and biased. Liberals and conservatives are broadly distinguished by how far they believe the realms of bias or neutrality extend. But their understanding of racial justice is the same: achieving justice means universalizing institutional practices in order to efface the distortions of irrational factors like race, ultimately making social life neutral to racial identity.

One consequence of this universalizing tendency is that diverse social phenomena begin looking the same because they are all forced into the same analytic categories, utilized regardless of particular context. The various social hierarchies based on race, gender, sexual preference, religion, age, national origin, language, and physical disability are treated categorically as the same phenomena because they are all variant forms of prejudice and discrimination based on irrational stereotyping. Legal and political discourse falls into the same pattern of abstraction, treating relations between Anglos and Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics under the generic heading of "discrimination against racial minorities." The social subordination of a particular group loses its complex, specific, and historical context, and becomes instead a formal, numerical problem of the relations of majorities to minorities, unified under the concept of "discrimination."

Moreover, given the idea of immutable characteristics —like skin color—common to categories of "discrimination," the struggle against racism seems to follow the script of liberal progress more generally. Race consciousness is understood as a form of status-based coercion, under which individuals are treated in particular ways because of the arbitrary fact of membership in a group they did not choose. Transcending race consciousness secures the freedom of the individual to choose group identification. Integrationist ideology embodies an underlying vision of American culture working itself pure by overcoming various impediments to individual choice. Freedom from racial discrimination is but one instance of the historical progress from status to contract, from caste to individual liberty. Individualism and universalism are linked.

Finally, the universalist dimension of integrationist thinking makes it plausible to conceive of a category of "reverse racism," which is really not "reverse" at all. Since racism is taken to be a deviation from a universal norm of objectivity, it can be practiced by anyone, and anyone can be its victim, regardless of their particular historical circumstances or social position. Thus a Black person who has stereotypes of whites is, within the integrationist ideology, racist in the same way as a white person prejudiced against Blacks. The integrationist picture derives its symmetry from the idea that race consciousness is cognate with the evil of racism.

The image of universality, and its aim of transcending racial consciousness, holds a deep attraction for many of us. It seems to reflect the actual, though occasional, glimpses we have in personal relations of a deep identity we all share as human beings in the very best moments of social life. The goal of racial integration gives social expression to our longing for authentic relations that transcend racial status and other forms of distance and difference. And integrationism appeals to the utopian ideal of translating these moments into organized institutional practices because, at the core, we are all the same, "regardless of race."

But this universalism also marks a narrowing of vision within integrationist ideology. Understanding this aspect of integrationism helps make sense of how well-intentioned people could view the manner in which racial integration has actually proceeded in American life as, without question, a progressive reform and conversely, ignore how this allegedly progressive reform has confirmed an underlying conservative politics, a politics that leaves status-quo social relations largely intact.

The liberal discourse of race actually contains two distinct ways of perceiving social practices. On the one hand, it provides a language of critique and reform, a means of articulating what needs to be changed in society in order to remedy the genuine wrongs of discrimination and bias. On the other hand, it also includes a language for concluding that particular social practices are fair because they are objective and unbiased—a narrative, in other words, of legitimation. This side of liberal discourse describes the realm of social life outside the influence of racial history and politics.

Take, for example, the debate about affirmative action. The familiar "dilemma" is that affirmative action requires the use of race as a socially significant category, while the ultimate aim of integrationists is the transcendence of race consciousness. Thus, liberal supporters of affirmative action have always been defensive because they themselves see it as a contradiction of their most fundamental convictions. As a result, integrationists characterize affirmative action as merely an exceptional remedy for past injustice, and as temporary, only needed in order to get institutions integrated. Then equal opportunity would take care of itself. Or they argue that beneficiaries of affirmative action have suffered a "deprived" background; putting a thumb on the side of minorities in the scales of social decision-making helps to even out the otherwise rational competition for social goods. Finally, they contend that affirmative action produces social diversity and that merit is not the sole basis on which to distribute social opportunities: having a racially diversified society is, in itself, a relevant value.

But whether articulated in terms of remedy, equal opportunity, or diversity, this kind of liberal support assumes that minority applicants are less qualified on objective criteria, and thus in order to integrate institutions, compromises must be made with standards that are neutral to culture. That's what the "dilemma" is all about. The rhetoric of affirmative action thus reproduces the core dichotomies of the liberal theory of race that I have just described. Conservatives preach a principled commitment to color blindness in institutional practices, even if it results in segregated institutions, while liberals advocate *limited* race consciousness in order to ensure that some integration actually takes place. But both camps are committed to the premise that the category of merit itself is neutral and impersonal, somehow independent of the economy of social power, with its historical currency of race, class, and gender.

The very fact that support for substantively reformist programs gets framed in the defensive rhetoric of "remedy" or "diversity," posed to counterbalance a purportedly objective finding of "lack of merit," is testimony to the deeper ways that civil rights reformism has worked to legitimate the very practices originally marked for reform. That is, by seeing "discrimination" as a deviation from otherwise legitimate selection procedures, the liberal approach tends to confirm the underlying ideology of just desserts, even as it identifies exceptions to that general process. Rather than engaging in a broad-scale consideration of why jobs, wealth, education, and power are distributed as they are, integrationism suggests that once the irrational "biases" of race consciousness are eradicated, we will all be treated fairly, as individuals. Integrationism thus unwittingly tends to reinforce a belief structure that helps to maintain existing power relations. As we have argued in *Tikkun,* people who accept the myth of meritocracy experience their own lack of wealth and power as testimony to their own personal inadequacy, rather than as contestable results of politics. Instead of organizing together to remake the world, they end up with destructive self-blame and engage in incessant attempts at self-improvement—a social neurosis grounded in the ideology of merit.

Since integrationists devoted so much time and energy to documenting the pervasiveness of American racism, they might have been expected to demand a radical transformation of social practices rather than assuming that social decision making would be based on merit. Yet many of the same whites who once carried out the program of American apartheid actually kept their jobs as the decision-makers in the employment offices of companies and in the admissions offices of schools. In institution after institution, progressive reformers found themselves struggling over the implementation of racial integration with the former administrators of segregation, who soon regrouped as an old guard "concerned" over the deterioration of "standards."

This continuity of institutional authority symbolizes the limited social reform that most integrationists associate with racial justice. But even more dramatically, criteria for defining "standards" used during the period of formal racial subordination continue to be used—so long as they are not "directly" racial. Racism is associated with the exclusion of people of color; it is assumed that the rest of the culture of segregated schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods could stay the same. The integrationist ideology of neutral standards has no conceptual base from which to question whether "standards," definitions of "merit," and other aspects of institutional life constructed or maintained during segregation might have reflected a particular culture in which it seemed normal to exclude Blacks.

Liberal integrationist ideology thus effectively excludes many crucial social practices from the purview

of race relations, and assumes they are unaffected by social power. This process characterizes the tendency for anti-discrimination reform to become part of a self-justifying ideology of privilege and status. The realm of neutral social practices from which bias and deviation are identified thus shields much of day-to-day institutional life from critical view as a manifestation of group power, of politics. For a more explicitly political approach to the racial character of everyday life, we need to look beyond liberal integrationism to the discourse of modern Black nationalism.

* * *

> But a segregated school system isn't necessarily the same situation that exists in an all-white neighborhood. A school system in an all-white neighborhood is not a segregated school system. The only time it's segregated is when it is in a community other than white, but that at the same time is controlled by the whites. So my understanding of a segregated school system, or a segregated community, or a segregated school, is a school that's controlled by people other than those that go there.... On the other hand, if we can get an all-Black school that we can control, staff it ourselves with the type of teachers that have our good at heart, with the type of books that have in them many of the missing ingredients that have produced this inferiority complex in our people, then we don't feel that an all-Black school is necessarily a segregated school. It's only segregated when its controlled by someone from the outside.... So what the integrationists, in my opinion, are saying when they say that whites and Blacks must go to school together, is that the whites are so much superior that just their presence in a Black classroom balances it out. I just can't go along with that.
>
> —Malcolm X, 1965

Although it has roots in the early nineteenth century, there is little doubt that Black nationalism had its most complete and sophisticated theoretical development, as well as its greatest mass appeal, during the sixties and early seventies. Nationalism was articulated as an alternative worldview to integrationism, and as part of a program of radical social transformation by Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael, Imamu Baraka, Harold Cruse, the Black Panthers, and quickly expanding factions of SNCC and CORE.

The Black nationalist position received its first modern wave of sustained mass exposure in 1966, when Willie Ricks and Stokely Carmichael began chanting the words "Black Power" during the March Against Fear in Mississippi. Tension between integrationist and nationalist factions was already emerging within—as well as between—various civil rights organizations. But the high-profile and polarized controversy over the term "Black Power" galvanized what had been largely an underground conflict into a full-scale, highly charged public debate over the fundamental nature and direction of the civil rights movement.

The mainstream reactions to the "Black Power" slogan showed how the idea of race consciousness was marginalized in the dominant cultural rhetoric. According to both Black and white integrationists, Black Power was equivalent to white supremacy. Hubert Humphrey's response was to "reject calls for racism, whether they come from a throat that is white or one that is black." Roy Wilkins charged that "no matter how endlessly they try to explain it, the term Black Power means anti-white power.... [It is] a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan." Kenneth Clark labeled Black Power a "racist philosophy," and the NAACP called Black Power advocates "Black neo-segregationists" and "advocates of apartheid." The virulent and extreme denunciation of Black Power symbolized the unity of what would quickly become the new center of American consciousness about race.

Integrationists had two basic problems with "Black Power." First, the slogan implied that power should be distributed on a *racial* basis, so that it made sense to think of power as belonging to separate white and Black communities. "Black Power" thus violated both the integrationist principle of transcending race consciousness at the ideological level and the integrationist program of ending the segregation of whites and Blacks at the institutional level. Second, the slogan implied that *power* was what determined the distribution of social resources and opportunities, rather than allegedly neutral qualities such as reason or merit. It was not simply the theory of Black Power that engendered such strong reactions, but more generally the nationalists' resistance to the liberal idea of progress through reasoned discussion. The most prominent symbols of the nationalist movement—the clenched fist of the Black Power salute and the militaristic affectations of many nationalist groups—expressed this resistance for supporters and foes alike. Integrationists saw nationalism as a regressive movement because, in their view, progress meant not only transcending race as a basis of social decision making, but in the longer run replacing power with reason as the ground for the distribution of resources.

But by and large, integrationists never understood the actual nationalist analysis of racial domination. As the nationalists saw it, what the integrationists called "reason" was really the deep assumptions, the "what goes without saying," of white culture. Rather than join

with the liberal project of replacing power with reason, Black nationalists embarked on a radical critique of Western epistemology. Nationalists contended that the rhetoric of reason, neutrality, and objectivity actually constitutes the particular discourse of power that white Europeans employed in order to justify their own privileged status. These ideas were therefore all defined in tacit reference to the specific cultural practices that reinforced white privilege. Reason, in short, could have no universal form; its content depended on the social context in which some had power to differentiate the reasonable and civilized from the primitive and mythological.

As the Black nationalists saw it, the integrationist aspiration to a universalist plane of race relations drains social life of any of the basic cultural conditions that gives it meaning. Our very sense of identity, nationalists argued, emerges out of membership in particular groups, and our sense of connection to people's specific cultural adaptation to their historical situations in particular times and places. Race is a central foundation on which cultural identity is formed in American social life, governing the distribution of wealth, power, and prestige —as well as the more general ways that cultural value is constructed. Rather than reject racial identity as a sign of particularism, parochialism, or as a badge of a disgraced past, nationalists embraced racial identity as one of the primary sources of meaning in our social lives.

The fundamental difference of the nationalist approach to race is reflected in the core proposition that Blacks constitute a nation. Integrationists commonly take this to be a call for literal geographic separatism. But there is no necessary relation between a nationalist approach and a separate, formal Black "nation." Instead, the image of Blacks comprising a "nation within a nation" carries a richer and more subtle meaning. It suggests that Blacks and whites are indeed different. We come from different communities, neighborhoods, churches, families, and histories, and are in various ways foreigners to each other. In contrast to the white supremacist ideology of natural, essential racial characteristics, the image of nationhood locates differences between whites and Blacks in social history, the realm of experience that gives rise to all national identity. As C. Lewis Munford observed, Blacks'

> common history ... is manifested in a concrete national culture, with a peculiar spiritual complexion. The conditions of existence for Blacks have, from generation to generation, welded the bonds of a national experience as different from white existence as day is from night. And what differentiates nations from one another are dissimilar conditions of life.

The idea of nationhood based on generations of "dissimilar conditions of life" characterizes a vision of community in stark contrast to the dichotomies of liberal social thought. The fundamental self-identification and the spiritual cohesion expressed in Black nationhood contested the liberal border between public objectivity and private sentiment. Nationalists contended that social bonds of identity and solidarity outside the strictly "private" realms of home and family can be liberating and fulfilling, even if they are not "chosen" by individuals but simply given through group status. For nationalists, we are, in a sense, thrown into history to define and defend our social identities with the historical materials at hand.

Thus the time-bound, messy, and particular relations between nations would be the central prism through which to perceive race. In this way, nationalists articulated a *historicized* view of social relations. This commitment to a historical view means that group identity is both contingent and real. No objective or natural necessity determines the way that groups, identities, and social meanings have been structured; since the significance of race is a social creation, it could have been constructed differently in the past, and could still be constructed differently in the future. Historicized race consciousness takes social history as the lived foundation for generating meaning in our social relations. Rather than imagining that people exist as autonomous individuals who create social relations out of acts of private will, nationalists viewed Blacks in terms of traditions and communities that provide the historical context for individual identity.

The philosophical implications of these divergent understandings of what a Black nation might mean came strongly to the fore in concrete and dramatic ways during conflicts over school integration. Integrationists and nationalists alike were compelled to articulate and defend their deepest assumptions about the nature of race and about what was truly in the interests of the Black community.

For integrationists, of course, public school integration was the centerpiece of racial reform. But nationalists claimed that school integration was undesirable for two main reasons. First, integration of Black and white schools entailed the abolition of one of the few organized institutions in the Black community. School integration therefore meant an even greater loss of social power among Blacks because it took away the prospect of controlling their own children's education. For Black nationalists, the measure of success was the impact of race reform on the community as a whole. As Stokely Carmichael put it, "the racial and cultural personality of the Black community must be preserved and the

community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity."

Second, nationalists asserted that school integration meant adapting Blacks to white norms—it entailed, in Carmichael's words, "taking Black children out of the Black community and exposing them to white middle-class values." Of course, nothing in the *concept* of school integration demanded that it proceed so as to reinforce the cultural norms of whites. But nationalists highlighted an aspect of American racial integration buried in the mainstream ideology of neutrality and universalism—that is, a critique of the cultural terms upon which integration in social institutions would proceed.

This aspect of integrationism underlies the idea Carmichael and others expressed that integration entailed the abolition of the Black community. Since integrationists had no conceptual category with which to comprehend Blacks as a separate national group, they by and large ignored the possibility of understanding racial justice in terms of the transfer of resources and power to the Black community at large. Rather than, say, providing the material means for improving the housing, schools, cultural life, and economy of Black neighborhoods, they gravitated toward the kind of mainstream race reform that envisioned "progress" only through Blacks moving into historically white neighborhoods, attending historically white schools, participating in white cultural activities, and working in white-owned and controlled economic enterprises. As Carmichael concluded, "even if such a program were possible, its result would be not to develop the Black community as a functional and honorable segment of the total society, with its own cultural identity, life patterns, and institutions, but to abolish it—the final solution to the Negro problem."

At the level of theory, integrationism did not mandate that Black school districts be dismantled, and their administrators and teachers be fired. But mainstream political discourse treated integration as a question of educational "quality," impartially transmitted and precisely measured. The question of the Black community sacrificing its own particular needs and a potential base of political power thus did not enter the minds of most adherents of integrationism. Given this kind of fundamentally different orientation, integrationists literally could not understand when Stokely Carmichael declared that integration was "a subterfuge for white supremacy," or when Robert Browne called it "a form of painless genocide."

The anti-assimilationist component of the nationalist critique was especially invisible to integrationists. Integrationists never considered that racially integrated schools might privilege the transmission of white culture. Instead, they viewed the images of expertise and quantitative achievement that long defined the ideology of public education as the institutional face of the philosophical commitment to reason and impersonality. Integrationists failed as well to recognize the cultural importance of Black schools, seeing them (along with other Black institutions) as "products of racial segregation that should not even exist," to quote Harold Cruse.

For a brief period in the late sixties and early seventies, these integrationist assumptions came under vigorous attack. For low-income Blacks, the nationalist approach to education unified popular movements for community control over schools in urban communities such as Harlem and Ocean Hill-Brownesville in New York, and Adams-Morgan in Washington, D.C. Among the middle class, nationalism prompted demands for the establishment of Afro-American Studies departments in predominantly white colleges across the country. In both contexts, nationalists asserted that educational reform could not be understood in terms of a "quality" education neutral to race, but had to be seen in terms of how schools serve the needs of an organic community held together by the bonds of a particular culture and history.

The cultural differences between Blacks and whites could not be studied through a neutral frame of reference, because *any* frame of reference assumes the perspective of either the oppressed or the oppressor, either Blacks or whites. Cultural differences are not limited to particular social activities like religious practices or artistic production, but instead inform the very ways that people perceive reality and experience the world. What is called "knowledge" reflects the ability of the powerful to impose their own views of the difference between knowledge and myth, reason and emotion, and objectivity and subjectivity. Knowledge from the nationalist vantage is a social construct, whose meaning



depends on a prior inquiry into social situation. Culture precedes epistemology.

This basic orientation connected various projects in the sixties and early seventies, including movements for community control over schools, for Black political, economic, and police control over Black neighborhoods, for race-conscious economic cooperation among Blacks, for reparations from the white community to Blacks, for the establishment and control of Afro-American Studies departments in universities, for the preservation and transformation of Black colleges and universities, and for cultural autonomy in arts, music, literature, and intellectual life. In short, the "cure" for racial domination depended upon the achievements of Black power in public spaces.

In my view, the conflict between integrationists and nationalists in the late sixties and early seventies represented a critical juncture in American race relations. How was it, then, that this juncture produced neither a victory for nationalism nor a higher synthesis of racial debate? How did integrationism come to be synonymous with racial justice—to the virtual exclusion of the nationalist position? I have already hinted at some of the broader, structural reasons for the continued marginalization of nationalism in mainstream debate. And a host of socioeconomic and historical evidence might be marshalled to explain nationalism's waning prestige. But a more compelling perspective can be had by looking beyond such empirical matters into the politics of racial and cultural identity—both within the Black community and among the wider communities of progressive-liberal social reform. This line of analysis will bring us back, as well, to the troubled relations between Blacks and Jews with which I began.

The transformation of American apartheid could have taken many forms, and even the program of racial integration could have been understood in different ways. But I believe that the *universalist* character of integrationist ideology satisfied an unstated need to justify the rejection of Black nationalists. This particular ideology of race was not simply "chosen" because it meshed well with traditional liberal ideas about epistemology, historical progress, or social justice. It was *constructed* in this way in response to the psycho-cultural anxieties about group- and self-identity that Black middle-class moderates and white upper- and middle-class liberals and progressives, and in particular secular Jews, experienced in the face of a revitalized Black nationalist tradition. The myth of universalism helped resolve these anxieties at the ideological level.

By the late 1960s, nationalism was a powerful political force and cultural ideology in urban Black communities. At that time, nationalism arguably had the upper hand—remember King's loss of influence among the young in general and among the northern urban poor in particular just prior to his assassination. In the hands of leaders like Malcolm X, nationalism was shedding the limited appeal of its earlier platform of geographic secessionism by mounting a campaign to dismantle existing power structures in Black and white communities rather than break off relations altogether. And nationalists had new leaders like Carmichael who came up through the ranks of the mainstream civil rights movement.

The struggle over the meaning of racial liberation produced a profound conflict between largely middle-class, older integrationists and urban, working-class, younger nationalists. The rupture between factions was reflected in the polarization of rhetoric. The nationalists deemed any association with whites the race treachery of "oreos" and the integrationists labeled nationalists "reverse racists." For members of the Black middle class—people who could contemplate integration as a real possibility—nationalism upset the hope they had cultivated since the turn of the century that the aims of civil rights and integration could be woven into mainstream American life. They had staked much of their political strength and self-understanding on continuing to be the elite of Black society, symbolizing the advances Blacks could make when given the opportunity. They were poised to play a historic role in aiding the "brothers" and "sisters" in their escape from the ghetto and enlistment in America's dominant institutions. This basic self-understanding was threatened by nationalists, who contended that the very success of the Black bourgeoisie betrayed the community as a whole—and bespoke a deeper psychic self-hatred in the sensitive realm of individual identity and integrity. The nationalist critique evoked enough of the Black middle class's long history of accommodation to white rule to generate a kind of group anxiety among the Black integrationist bourgeoisie. Integrationism, in its universalist form, helped symbolically to alleviate this anxiety by denying that the world to which the Black middle class aspired was racially identifiable. Universalist imagery reassured members of the Black middle class eager to integrate white schools, jobs, and neighborhoods that, far from forsaking their communities and personal identities, they were simply enjoying the racially neutral fruits of equal opportunity.

Conversely, the very predominance of the civil rights ideology of integrationism produced a similar anxiety for nationalists that extreme expressions of Black separatism and racial antagonism helped resolve. According to Harold Cruse, the particularly violent and hateful rhetoric that came to characterize Black nationalists arose from a psychological attempt to overcome the deeply ingrained idea that political action by Blacks

depended on interracial conditions. Cruse concludes that nationalists had to muster hatred for whites "in order to avoid the necessity of apologizing to whites for excluding them." In these postures, the Black integrationist and Black nationalist camps tended to confirm the worst images of each other.

Many factors contributed to nationalism's decline and fall—including state repression and nationalists' increasingly rigid and fanatical revolutionary rhetoric. But there can be no question that the near-total rejection of nationalism by whites was critical.

To be sure, white rejection can be accounted for in different ways. Given the separatist tendencies of pre-1960s nationalists, white progressives almost by definition had no tradition of associating race consciousness with liberation. Whites who were serious about race reform supported the NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and CORE in the struggle for civil rights and racial integration. Moreover, when whites became aware of nationalism in the 1960s, it was in the form of the militant and angry rhetoric of Malcolm X, and then of the Black Power advocates. Liberal and progressive whites obviously were put off by such sharp denunciations coming from nationalist leaders.

But the notion that whites were simply repelled by Black nationalists does not fully account for the deeper ways in which white liberals and progressives repudiated nationalism as an ideology of race reform. Their embrace of integrationism in the specific universalist form that it took in the 1960s was more subtly related to anxieties about their own cultural identity. For these whites, the nationalist celebration of the particularities of Black culture brought to the surface unresolved anxieties they had concerning their own feelings about both Blacks and themselves. These anxieties gathered around two key issues. First, whites committed to nonracism had spent a great deal of energy and concentration overcoming the teachings of white racism that Black difference—and specifically, Black inferiority—justified racial hierarchy. Second, to the extent that a residue of race stereotype remained in white liberal consciousness, it took the form, as we have noted, of a vague sort of culture envy.

In other words, for white liberals and progressives, the nationalist assertion of a particular Black culture immediately elicited white anxiety that, in fact, the nationalists were right—Blacks had the kind of cohesive and rich culture that whites felt they themselves lacked. Indeed, the very fact of Black particularity triggered the whole complex of white supremacist associations that white "nonracists" strenuously repressed: having a particular culture was like being a primitive, having a distinct Black folk life, a spirituality, and a sexuality that stood as opposites to rationalism, objectivity, and civilization. Black nationalism, particularly in the macho and Africanist forms that it took in the late 1960s, exposed the deepest inner anxieties of white culture. To resolve these anxieties, whites afflicted with culture envy embraced the most sweeping kind of integrationist universalism. People just "happen to be Black," "happen to be white." And it no longer made sense to think about institutional practices in racial or cultural forms, because there were no cultures tied to racial identity anyway. And so it came to be that for whites, integrationism paradoxically constituted an indirect defense of the racial status quo.

The embrace of integrationism is the symbolic face of a new cultural "center" in relation to which Black "militants" and white "rednecks" are extremists. Comprehending racism as "bias" meant that race would be understood as just one of a range of arbitrary characteristics—like gender or sexual preference—that "right-thinking" people should learn to ignore. The fact that everyday public school culture, for instance, was basically a white culture never really occurred to otherwise decent and committed white liberals. And for the middle-class Blacks who aligned with whites in constructing the integrationist vision—and whose support was obviously critical to its legitimacy—the racial character of "integrated" institutions must have been more apparent. And yet that very obviousness made the embrace of universalist imagery all the more important to the self-respect of middle-class Blacks.

From the outside, it was apparent that this cultural stance had a distinctly white, middle class, and Protestant flavor—a sort of secular counterpart to the bland religious pluralism of Unitarianism. That is, the culture that descended on Southern schools in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, was something more than the narrow policy of integration. *Both* Southern whites and Blacks felt it to be imposed from the outside, more precisely from the upper-middle-class white Northeast. But the cultural character of the center—the integrationist mainstream—was invisible from within it.

Among Jews, who made up an important subset of white integrationists, these issues of cultural identity were particularly acute, and the commitment to the universalist interpretation of racial justice particularly compelling. Given our Zionism—our support for a nationalist expression of Jewish identity—one might have thought that progressive and liberal Jews would have had little trouble with the nationalist aspirations of Blacks, and would have been the least likely group to associate "integrated" institutions with cultural neutrality. But in fact it was Jews who, among the white Left, were *most* troubled by the race consciousness of the Black nationalists.



One aspect of our reaction was our (occasionally confirmed) suspicion that nationalists were anti-Semites—that rhetoric about community control of the economy and schools was based on specific images of Jewish merchants and teachers in the Black community. This suspicion found painful expression in 1968, with the Ocean Hill-Brownesville confrontation. Blacks and Hispanics won a commitment from the city to experiment with local control over this Brooklyn school district. The nationalist-oriented school board sought the ouster of white teachers, including several Jews, on the ground that they were not sufficiently committed to community control. Liberal Jewish organizations charged anti-Semitism; Jewish teachers and community leaders claimed the community control threatened educational "equality" and "merit." The conflict escalated into a month-long city-wide teachers' strike against community control, which the union eventually won. But the power struggle between Black nationalists and Jewish professionals in Ocean Hill-Brownesville was only the visible face of an ideological gulf that already existed.

Ocean Hill-Brownesville brought to the fore a deeper strand in our diaspora culture. It dramatized the particular way that largely secular progressive Jews have embraced the universalist, liberal ideology underlying integrationism as a way to resolve our own anxieties over cultural identity and assimilation. The claim that cultural politics were not at stake in school practices served to deny that cultural identity was an intractable feature of the social institutions to which we had assimilated.

I believe that our embrace of contemporary American liberalism and cultural pluralism was a defensive reaction to the trauma of the Holocaust in particular and our own history of persecution in general. We embraced the liberal norms of neutrality, objectivity, and reason because we interpreted both anti-Semitism and nazism as the victory of passion and prejudice. We put faith in the liberal vision of impartiality and neutrality because we believed it would protect us and others from social domination. And thus we have been among liberalism's strongest supporters.

Progressive Jewish support for civil rights thus arose from the same vision of cultural neutrality that underlay opposition to school prayer. It was no coincidence that the abolition of school prayer, along with desegregation, was the major education reform Jews have supported. As we viewed the issues, public institutions should not discriminate Black from white, nor Jewish from Christian. And we tended to distinguish the Black civil rights movement's connection to the church from its reformist aspects, by acting as though an accident of history made the church the strongest source of moral authority and political mobilization within the Black community.

The problem is that we also know that there is no such thing as cultural neutrality. To take schools as an example, we have all encountered—directly or through our children—the culture of public education, and we know that simply banning the Lord's Prayer and Christmas from public schools did not magically render this institution of Protestant culture a benign, universalist setting. Our cultural compromise, rather, has consisted in our pretending that an outer public culture is really neutral to us. Thus we even have been *over*zealous in our opposition to any explicit reference to Christianity in public, as if banishing crosses and Christmas trees in and of itself could transform public space. The benefit of the compromise has been that we have not been persecuted as Jews—but it is a compromise nonetheless. We confirm this each time we leave our homes, synagogues, and community centers and enter more public spaces, where we *feel* gentile culture, even as we insist to ourselves it is simply neutral. The tone of conversations, interpersonal relations, and the sedate reasonableness of civic life all finally betray the compromises we have made with our private identities as Jews. In other words, Woody Allen's evocation of the gentile family dinner in *Annie Hall* continues to capture the quality of much of our experience of public life. For progressive Jews in particular, nationalism brought to a kind of group consciousness the aspects of our "freedom" in America that are, from the nationalist view, the marks of our assimilation.

The conflict between liberal assimilationism and nationalist historicism, in short, is not limited to race. The politics of assimilation and identity has produced

analogous divisions of opinion within the Jewish community; between universalists or internationalists on the one hand and Zionists on the other. Like Black nationalists, Zionists have consistently argued that the liberal, universalist ideology that Western Jews have embraced in the Diaspora—and particularly in the Reform movement—falsifies the actual character of a culture such as mainstream America's, which presents itself as religiously neutral. According to the traditional Zionist argument, the universalism that liberal societies proclaim for their "secular" public space is really the particular cultural territory of Christians who have arrogantly proclaimed their own practices as the neutral, universal definition of justice. Zionists argue that many Jews have repressed their experience of the culturally specific character of life in liberal societies in order to better assimilate and avoid oppression. By accepting the culture into which they are assimilating as universal, rather than merely gentile, Jews can avoid facing the betrayal implicit in the will to assimilate. Assimilation, under such auspices, is not even an issue.

In terms of race, it should now be apparent that the exclusion of a nationalist approach to racial justice from mainstream discourse has been a severe cultural and political mistake. As a result, the boundaries of racial politics have become exceedingly narrow. The triumph of integrationism bears testimony to the aversion to thinking in terms of race at all. Taking our cues from integrationists, we thus manage instead to filter discussion of the wide disparities between Black and white communities through the nonracial languages of poverty and class, and avoid altogether the racial implications of "integrated" social life.

By now everyone in mainstream political culture takes it for granted that race reform is something that combats bias at the level of individual consciousness, opposes discrimination at the level of social practice, and aspires to integration at the level of institutional change. In the last three decades, tremendous social resources and personal energy have been expended on integrating formerly white schools, work places, neighborhoods, and attitudes. This program has had some success in improving the lives of specific people and in transforming the climate of overt racial domination that shaped American society before the advent of civil rights reform. But it has been pursued to the exclusion of a commitment to the vitality of the Black community as a whole and to the economic and cultural health of Black neighborhoods, schools, economic enterprises, and individuals. It is frustrating to reconsider the long history of American race relations from this perspective. One gets the sense that if, at any number of points in American history, a nationalist program of race reform had been adopted, much of the contemporary racial predicament might have been avoided. Blacks in virtually every urban center would not now be concentrated into disintegrating housing. They would not be sending their children to underfunded and overcrowded schools to learn a nationally prescribed curriculum—and then out to play in parks and on streets alongside drug dealers and gang warriors. And they would not be working at the bottom of the economic hierarchy—if they are lucky enough to have a job at all. If the community-to-community reparations promised as far back as the forty-acres-and-a-mule pledge of Radical Reconstructionists in the 1870s had actually been made, the politics of race would likely present us with entirely different prospects. If by the 1940s, say, the Black community had been assured of its economic autonomy, the kind of Black economic cooperatives and Black-run schools, newspapers and cultural institutions advocated by W. E. B. Du Bois might today exist as foundations for healthy Black neighborhoods. Or if a similar program had been adopted in the 1960s, in place of the exclusive focus on integrating white institutions, one can imagine that Black neighborhoods would by and large be healthy, cosmopolitan parts of the urban scene rather than ghettos of hopelessness and frustration.

I do not mean to suggest that Black nationalists in the 1960s, or at any other point in our history, had the perfect plan for social transformation, or that they always pursued the best strategies for acquiring political power and mass support. On the contrary, the tendency to essentialize Black identity around prescribed images of "authentic" Black culture has been a recurring and regressive undercurrent of the nationalist presence. At times this essentializing tendency has generated its own forms of oppression and craziness—such as the uncritical nationalist embrace of Black machismo, or the celebration of dubiously "authentic" African mores. But the dominant image, especially among whites, that Black nationalism is simply a form of reverse racism is just plain wrong.

The failure of progressive and liberal whites to comprehend the possibility of a liberating rather than repressive meaning of race consciousness has distorted our understanding of race in the past, and obscured ways we might meaningfully transform race relations in the future. Integrationists have mistakenly viewed white cultural practices as racially neutral. Even when they consider the possibility of ethnocentrism, their aim of racial neutrality has only made institutions more bland than before. Such antiseptic attempts at universalism have ensured the alienation of anyone with any cultural identity at all.

At this point, we can better comprehend the back-

ground uneasiness that informs relations between Blacks and Jews. Even though explicit nationalism has been taboo in public discourse, the nationalist approach has profoundly influenced progressives in the Black community. For them, race consciousness is central. To the extent that progressive Jews have seen integrationism as the synonym for racial justice, we have been simply out of touch with the progressive currents of Black thought in the past two decades. A sense of disconnection still underlies efforts at coalition because we have been thinking about social justice in very different ways.

We should understand that there are powerful psychological and historical reasons why liberal integrationism has been so attractive to us—and why we have therefore been suspicious of nationalism. But the tendency of many Jews to associate any form of nationalism with nazism cannot justify the recent rise of anti-Semitism in the Black community. Both our communities have legitimate aspirations to nationhood that progressives on all sides must honor. Zionism is not racism, any more than Black nationalism is reverse racism.

We, as whites and Jews, need to reconsider our position in the cultural compromise that has defined the race discourse for the past few decades. We should, I think, begin to consciously understand ourselves as having a particular, historically constructed identity through the economy of cultural and race relations. For Jews, part of this means understanding that in America a large part of our identity is as whites. This kind of identification need not mean an interest in racial domination, nor must it result in paralyzing guilt and self-flagellation. Rather than despising what reveals them as white, and engaging in neurotic self-improvement to remove such "biases," whites in general can only advance meaningful racial debate by recognizing that racial culture decisively shapes our social relations.

Moreover, a reconsideration of civil rights by liberal Jews should include a reevaluation of the way that we have traditionally understood what social justice means with respect to our Jewishness. A nationalist Jewish identity can mean that, rather than repressing our culture in public spaces, we celebrate Jewish identity. Such a renewal of the particularity of Jewish culture would, ironically, help overcome the sense of distrust that Blacks and Jews feel today. The liberal 1960s alliance between Blacks and Jews, so instrumental to the cause of integrationism, must now be replaced by a new joint project: the creation of a public life where inclusion of particular groups does not mean a repression of particularity itself. □

NATHAN GLAZER

Gary Peller argues for something that I believe we already have. And when he argues for more, he becomes murky and unrealistic. What we have is the acceptance of racial and ethnic particularity and indeed the acceptance of its celebration in public space: What else does a national holiday for Martin Luther King, or the common sight of yarmulkes in public, mean? And what else does the existence of a broad range of both Black and Jewish schools signify? For Blacks especially, such institutions are burgeoning, both in the public sector (where an "Afrocentric" curriculum, whatever that may mean, is becoming the norm in Washington and other cities with a majority Black population—and even in cities with a minority Black population), and in the private sector (which runs the gamut from Black Muslim private schools to institutions modeled on the culture and discipline of Catholic parochial schools). Children in public schools are taught in scores of home languages. While this is seen in law as a further means to assimilation, a process that Peller rejects, in fact such programs serve to preserve language and culture, in their curricula, teaching, and administration.

To this extent, classic liberal assimilationism is dead. The kind of Americanizing experience that those of my generation underwent in the New York City schools would be considered an outrageous exercise of hegemonic Eurocentrism today. But in more practical terms, it couldn't exist today, because there would be no one to enforce and administer it, with a Black mayor and a Hispanic chancellor standing at the apex of the system, and great numbers of Black and Hispanic administrators and teachers strongly influencing it.

Nathan Glazer is a professor at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard. He is the author of Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality in Public Policy *(Harvard University Press, 1987).*

Now this is clearly not enough for Gary Peller: he wants more. Both liberals and conservatives are committed, he tells us, to the "premise that the category of merit itself is neutral and impersonal, somehow independent of the economy of social power, with its historical currency of race, class, and gender." Apparently this emphasis on merit should be opposed by a "radical transformation of social practices.... Liberal integrationist ideology effectively excludes many crucial social practices from the purview of race relations and assumes they are unaffected by social power..." since "the integrationist ideology of neutral standards has no conceptual base from which to question whether 'standards,' definitions of 'merit' ... might have reflected a particular culture in which it seemed normal to exclude Blacks." What these quotations seem to be struggling to tell us is that, as against "merit"—which is viewed suspiciously as defined by, what, Anglo-Saxon culture?—there should be something else: race affiliation? or perhaps race empathy? The "something else" is never defined, but Peller seems to want to legitimate it by reference to everything it is not—not merit, not universal, not rational, not neutral.

Now there are many areas in which these qualities are not overriding criteria and cannot be—in elections, for example, where people choose whom they want, regardless of the greater "competence," in some sense, of a Mondale over a Reagan, a Gantt over a Helms, or a Koch over a Dinkins. But there are other cases where we hope merit would be overriding—as in selecting airline pilots and surgeons. There are many areas in between where we might disagree, such as over the qualifications of teachers and policemen. We would still want teachers to know how to read and write, and policemen to know the laws they enforce. Peller writes: "As the nationalists saw it, what the integrationists called 'reason' was really the deep assumptions, the 'what goes without saying,' of white culture.... Reason, in short, could have no universal form..." Indeed. But I think bridges, for example, stand up under the same principles regardless of the culture. We would need many more specifics from Peller before we could acknowledge the limits of reason, or define the areas where it is inappropriate.

The model that Peller is struggling to articulate emphasizes power above competence, a racial or group basis for determining who gets what, in the place of whatever rules have emerged to gain general acceptance: the rules of inheritance, merit as a qualification for jobs, money as the grounds for allocating housing and consumer goods. Once these obstacles were swept away, however, it is extremely unclear what would follow in their wake. "Integrationists," we are told, "ignored the possibility of understanding racial justice in terms of the transfer of resources and power to the Black community at large." This screams for specificity. What is "the Black community at large"? Aren't politics and redistributive taxation and benefits a means of "transferring resources"? In what ways are they inadequate? Isn't the election of Black mayors a form of "transfer of power"? How is that inadequate?

This undefined transfer would have led, Peller asserts, through an undefined route, to happy Black communities. "Community to community reparations," or the "economic autonomy" of the Black community, would have created "healthy Black communities." Even leaving aside the political possibilities or the economic rationality of either reparations or autonomy, I simply don't see just how it would have worked. I am not proposing an alternative explanation of the terrible decay of Black communities. But certainly we need more than what Peller offers to understand how the current situation could have been avoided. Indeed, in large measure, it *was* avoided up until the 1960s, when the situation in Black communities began to get radically worse. The argument for a higher degree of economic autonomy would have to be better specified, and a host of objections would have to be dealt with, before one could believe it offered a better alternative than the well-known routes to upward economic mobility—study, schooling, work, saving—that have been wide open for Blacks for twenty-five years, and somewhat open, depending on time and place, for a good number of years before that. □

MICHAEL DYSON

Gary Peller presents a thoughtful and provocative critique of the ideologies that have shaped modern racial debate. Slashing away at liberal myths of integrationism's rational necessity and historical inevitability, Peller skillfully historicizes contemporary racial relations in order to show their roots in particular social and cultural traditions.

But Peller's arguments for adopting a Black nationalist approach to racial politics are less persuasive. Indeed the terms of debate within the Black community should prompt us to reconsider whether modern nationalism can easily be juxtaposed to integrationism as its ideo-

Michael Eric Dyson is a cultural critic who teaches at Chicago Theological Seminary, and is completing a book of essays on racial politics in American culture.

logical antithesis. Black nationalism and integrationism are complex, heterogeneous, and varied traditions. Although Peller concedes that Black nationalism is not a monolithic tradition, he more often than not portrays *both* integrationism and nationalism in monolithic terms. This leads him to overlook conflicting and contradictory elements within each tradition, as well as important points of contact that they share. For instance, even an avowed integrationist like Martin Luther King, Jr. showed considerable flexibility in the course of his own ideological evolution. Although King eschewed the tactics of violent confrontation that many nationalists advocated, he readily embraced their wider goals of political empowerment, racial pride, and community solidarity.

King initially strategized for Blacks to be brought within the larger compass of the American social, political, and cultural mainstream. But he later reconsidered this position. He began to believe that simple and uncritical integration tacitly endorsed the inequitable distribution of wealth, health care, employment, and other social goods that shaped the course of American capitalism both at home and abroad. This emergent radicalism informed, for example, King's early opposition to the war in Vietnam, as well as his growing solidarity with urban working-class Blacks—and whites as well. One need only remember that King was organizing garbagemen on strike in Memphis at the time of his death to see how the integrationist position could converge with important points of the nationalist program.

And Malcolm X, beginning from a position of narrow nationalism, moved toward a parallel point of affinity with a politics of transracial coalition. Social contact—the cultural value, as Peller observes, that was the centerpiece of integrationist reform—with traditional Muslims and Black Africans provided him with empirical validation of transracial life as a social fact and political possibility. He was thereby compelled to rethink the racial exclusionism of Elijah Muhammed's Nation of Islam, and to begin promoting a more tolerant race-specific consciousness that could build alliances between races and nations. The radicalization of Martin and the race-specific tolerance of Malcolm thus exhibited the complex interaction of the diverse traditions of integrationism and nationalism.

The sharp distinctions Peller draws between integrationists and nationalists do help us understand how these traditions have diverged; but his analysis sheds less light on important points of convergence these disparate traditions have reached on issues of racial pride and varieties of Black economic development. And this is why he falters as well in adapting his psycho-cultural critique of white liberal integrationism to explain the motivations of Black integrationists. Blacks within the integrationist camp—with some notable exceptions—were far less disposed than their white counterparts to view Black nationalists as reverse racists. Black nationalism has a long tradition of influencing Black social thought, and has been prominent at every crucial juncture of Black American political history. Various strands of nationalist ideology have informed the thought of many Black integrationists and progressives, in much the same way they informed important elements of King's political development.

Black nationalism boasts a rich theoretical and cultural history that includes what some intellectuals have called its "golden age," from 1850 to 1925. Far from being founded on a narrow platform of mere secessionism, this phase of nationalism commanded the allegiance of a wide range of Black intellectuals, from Alexander Crummell to W. E. B. Du Bois, and achieved its widest popularity in the Black community under the imaginative and controversial leadership of Marcus Garvey. It is thus rather puzzling that Peller finds nationalism's most compelling moment to be the 1960s—and particularly the Black Power movement and the Nation-of-Islam–era pronouncements of Malcolm X. We have good reason to question whether that brand of nationalism can serve as a basis of a viable contemporary racial and cultural politics. Some form of Black nationalism will always be present in racial debate, by virtue of its dialectical relationship to integrationism, and its parasitic relationship to liberal society at large. But the rampant sexism of 1960s-era (and for that matter, contemporary) nationalism, its ethnic exclusivism, and its racial separatism prevent its adherents from forging necessary and healthy coalitions with other progressive groups. And this in turn has meant that it has been severely handicapped in its efforts to win material and political gains. A nationalism symbolically tied to the 1960s-era legacy is thus an unlikely candidate to achieve the goals that Peller has thoughtfully envisioned for it.

Contemporary Black nationalism, or neonationalism, is primarily a cultural affair: witness rap music, Spike Lee's films, and the symbolic adoption of Egypt as a trope of racial origins. Though these cultural achievements are often significant and provocative, they do not by themselves promise a racial or cultural politics that can deliver the political vision, economic rehabilitation, moral renewal, and social reconstruction that the Black community so desperately needs. Nor does it effectively address those who are the most desperate: the Black poor, mostly women and children, who suffer silent death by suffocation in the decay of our inner cities. The kind of Black nationalism that Peller defends cannot claim even the limited successes that integrationism can in addressing the demoralizing and destructive so-

cial forces that blight America's racial landscape. Only forms of racial consciousness such as the race-specific universalism of the mature Malcolm X can begin to supply the materials for the urgent task at hand. They can analyze the specific conditions of Black oppression, while linking this analysis to other important categories of social identity and solidarity such as gender and class. Only with such linkages can we hope to immediately ameliorate and ultimately eradicate the structural impediments to real Black liberation. □

Thomas Byrne Edsall

The premise underlying Gary Peller's argument, that there is a compelling need for a ground-zero reevaluation of anti-poverty and civil rights legislation, is indisputable. Such legislation has produced dramatically mixed results—success for those equipped to enter the middle class, and failure for those who are not. The emergence of a predominantly Black underclass, along with the sharp rise in illegitimacy and welfare dependency since the early 1960s, are compelling evidence of the need to examine all possible alternatives, ranging from infusing market forces into communities where the private sector is almost nonexistent, to providing massive support for young poor people whose families often lack money, fathers, and base emotional support.

The failure of existing initiatives has prompted voters not only to call into question domestic spending programs geared to the poor, but also—as evidenced by white flight from the Democratic party—to withdraw a degree of consensual support for civil rights principles. The real danger for those who seek to achieve equality in America is that a segment of the electorate seems to believe that civil rights and anti-poverty legislation constitute not an attempt to provide opportunity to individuals denied access to full participation in communal life, but rather a set of policies transferring benefits from one race to another.

Democratic pollsters have discovered, much to their discomfort, that anger over rising tax rates, over racial preferences in hiring and education, over welfare costs, and over the high crime rate among the Black poor has contributed to the evaporation of white working-class and lower-middle-class faith in the efficacy and importance of government. Significant numbers of white working- and lower-middle-class voters—voters essential to a progovernment political coalition—perceive civil rights policies as reforms that impose taxes on those who work in order to pay the cost of services for those who do not.

Policies aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the poor—focusing on matters ranging from welfare regulation to the implementation of minority quotas—have contributed to the near institutionalization of racial conflict, which also has the unwelcome side effect of distorting the economic base of national political coalitions. In many sections of the South and in such major northern cities as metropolitan Detroit and Chicago, presidential voting patterns are determined as much, or more, by the color of a voter's skin than by income, education, or employment. Amidst the apparent restoration of economic populism, which grew out of a decade of increasingly regressive trends in the distribution of income, there is a new brutality afoot when it comes to race. Voters have become increasingly opposed to a host of welfare and affirmative action programs that may serve legitimate goals; such programs have in fact become a source of voter conflict.

In his attempt to break the deadlock that now characterizes discussion of poverty and civil rights policy, Peller develops an argument based on an elementary observation about human behavior: individuals are better equipped to cope with life and to make the best use of their talents if they have grown up in a coherent, self-respecting community in which cultural traditions are honored, not rejected. To this fact of life, Peller then proceeds to add a set of quintessentially romantic—not to mention impractical—notions. These include the idea that policy in the 1960s should have been set by Black nationalists rather than by integrationists; that a large enough transfer of money and resources from the white to the Black community in the 1940s to assure "economic autonomy" would have been politically feasible; and that cultural separatism would have been a better avenue to equality than policies seeking to unite Blacks and whites. Peller does not

---

Thomas Byrne Edsall is a political reporter at The Washington Post *and author of the forthcoming* Chain Reaction: A Study on Race and American Politics *(W. W. Norton, 1991).*

spell out in any detail what kinds of concrete policies he would in fact support, and this brief summary may do him a disservice, but it is a disservice only Peller can correct: he never describes his goals with any specificity.

Many of the Black nationalists Peller would have vested, in the 1960s, with greater authority were in fact without a feasible agenda for genuine economic equality. Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X, and a host of others were cultural revolutionaries, intellectually significant in their time, but in no way prepared to lead or to lay the groundwork for an economically competitive Black community. For many Black nationalists, capitalism itself was seen as inextricably linked to—indeed, a fundament of—racist society. Peller would like to deny that this is an impediment to proposing practical changes. The reality, however, is that for millions of Black—and Hispanic, Asian, and white—youths, there is no arena in which to compete other than the profit-driven private sector. Ideological rejection of this arena without an alternative does not offer much in the way of either opportunity or hope. The practical—if not the ideological—shortcomings of many of the Black nationalists to whom Peller would have turned is reflected in the blighted lives, both tragic and desultory, of such figures as Cleaver, Huey Newton, and H. Rap Brown.

In writing about the virtues of Black nationalism, Peller suffers from the kind of cultural distortion, or "culture envy," he criticizes in other liberals. In a leap of faith, Peller argues that the development of a sense of Black "nationhood" will help define and shape "Blacks in terms of tradition and communities that provide the historical context for individual identity," a contention he declines to elaborate further. Peller assumes that as recently as the 1960s the Black community was fully equipped to absorb and capitalize on hypothetical reparations. Brushing aside the havoc wrought—and the cultural strengths systematically devastated—during three centuries of slavery and legal discrimination, and neatly skirting the issue of how much money would have been necessary, and the political impossibility of transfers on such a scale, Peller mourns instead a lost opportunity to have redressed three centuries of slavery and legal discrimination with a one-shot infusion of cash. Such cash, Peller seems to be saying, would have disentangled white America from further obligation to or interaction with Black neighborhoods, which would have become forthwith "healthy, cosmopolitan parts of the urban scene rather than ghettos of hopelessness and frustration."

What Peller does not acknowledge is that, like it or not, economic competition rewards just those "middle-class" norms and values that Peller indirectly suggests are the racist impositions of the whites who dominate the social hierarchy. Peller talks superficially about a reparational transfer of assets without reference to the enormous difficulties in translating "seed money" into ongoing structures of generative wealth, and without reference to the mechanisms of internal wealth creation essential to any ascendent community or ethnic group.

Finally, while I am not suggesting that this is Peller's motive, his argument lends comfort to those who oppose the goal of equality. The hard—and sometimes cruel—work of equality will be achieved on racially common ground, not through separatist movements in which one group commands negligible resources, and the forces eating away at the well-being of those on the bottom get more powerful and more dangerous each day.

Caricaturing contemporary notions of "qualification" for access to any specific job or training as themselves ideologically tainted, Peller advocates calling their bases into question. Instead, the discriminatory impact of a range of commonly applied qualifying standards needs to be appraised critically. A host of very tough questions remains to be addressed by the nation: questions that are evaded, not answered, by calls for a revival of Black nationalism. What in fact are the causes of racial and ethnic disparities between Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and whites on standardized job and academic-performance tests—disparities leading to the most commonly criticized form of racial preference, the quota? And what policies can be adopted to correct these differences without engendering political backlash, and without doing violence to principles of equal opportunity and democracy? Is our welfare system as it is now constructed working to undermine social and familial responsibility? What are optimal levels of government involvement in a range of private activities—in international markets, as well as in the effort to introduce generative sources of economic strength into the nation's poorest communities?

Such questions, in a sense, make moot issues of assimilation and separatism. The modern world is relentlessly forcing change—Black nationalism within the territorial United States is as doomed as any other effort to institute political policies that arbitrarily separate human beings, their ideas, their interest, or their common experience. The usefulness—indeed, the necessity—of ideologies, texts, and interpreters that assert a people's centrality shouldn't be underestimated; nor should the power a sense of autonomy and historical rootedness gives to any people. But doctrines providing a rationale for either white disengagement or for Black retreat provide false comfort. To pursue such doctrines—particularly without accompanying them with plausible economic strategies—is to court the gravest danger. □

FICTION

To Know a Woman

Amos Oz

Yoel picked the object up from the shelf and inspected it closely. His eyes ached. The real-estate agent, thinking he had not heard the question, repeated it: "Shall we go and take a look around the back?" Even though he had already made up his mind, Yoel was in no hurry to reply. He was in the habit of pausing before answering, even simple questions such as "How are you?" or "What did it say on the news?" As though words were personal possessions that should not be parted with lightly.

The agent waited. In the meantime there was a silence in the room, which was stylishly furnished: a wide, deep-pile, dark-blue rug, armchairs, a sofa, a mahogany coffee table, an imported television set, a huge philodendron in the appropriate corner, a red-brick fireplace with half a dozen logs arranged in criss-cross fashion, for show rather than use.

With his eyes and fingers Yoel explored the thing he had taken off the shelf. It was a carving, a figurine, the work of an amateur: a feline predator, carved in brown olivewood and coated with several layers of lacquer. Its jaws were gaping wide and the teeth were pointed. The two front legs were extended in the air in a spectacular leap; the right hind leg was also in the air, still contracted and bulging with muscles from the effort of jumping, only the left hind leg preventing the takeoff and grounding the beast on a stainless-steel stand. The body rose at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the tension was so powerful that Yoel could almost feel in his own flesh the pain of the confined paw and the desperation of the interrupted leap. He found the statuette unnatural and unconvincing, even though the artist had succeeded in imposing on the wood an excellent feline litheness. This was not the work of an amateur, after all. The detail of the jaws and the paws, the twist of the springlike spine, the tension of the muscles, the arching of the belly, the fullness of the diaphragm inside the strong rib cage, even the angle of the beast's ears—swept back, almost flattened toward the back of the head—all the detailed work was excellent and evinced a mastery of the secret of defying the limitations of matter. This was evidently an accomplished piece of carving, liberated from its woodenness and achieving a cruel, fierce, almost sexual vitality.

Yet, even so, something had not come out right. Something or other was awry, obtrusive: either too finished, as it were, or not finished enough. What it was, Yoel could not discover. His eyes ached. Again he nursed a suspicion that this was the work of an amateur. But where was the defect? A faint, physical anger stirred inside him, with a certain momentary urge to stretch up on the tips of his toes.

Perhaps it was time to admit defeat and start wearing glasses. Here he was, a widower, forty-seven years old, already enjoying early retirement, a free man in almost every sense of the word: what point was there in his stubbornly denying the plain truth: that he was tired. He had earned a rest and he needed one. His eyes burned sometimes, and occasionally print became blurred, particularly by the light of his bedside lamp at night. And yet the main questions were still unresolved. If the predator was heavier than the base and projected almost entirely beyond it, the thing ought to overbalance. If the join was secured with glue, it should have come apart ages ago. If the beast was complete, what was the invisible defect? What was the source of his feeling that there was some flaw? If there was a hidden trick, what was it?

Finally, in a vague rage—Yoel was angry even at the fury that was stirring within him, because he liked to see himself as a calm, self-contained man—he took hold of the animal by the neck and endeavoured, not by force, to break the spell and release the magnificent beast from the torment of the mysterious grip. Perhaps the invisible flaw would also vanish.

"Come on," said the agent. "It would be a pity to break it. Shall we go and look at the garden shed? The garden may look a bit neglected but a morning's work would get it right as rain."

Delicately, with a slow caress, Yoel ran a cautious finger around the secret join between the living and the inanimate.

"Fine," he said, "I'll take it."

"Pardon?"

"I've decided to take it."

"Take what?" asked the agent, confused, peering somewhat suspiciously at his client. The man appeared compact, tough, deeply entrenched in the inner recesses

---

Amos Oz's works include Black Box *(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1988), and* In the Land of Israel *(Random House, 1984). This excerpt comes from* To Know a Woman. *Copyright © 1989 by Amos Oz and Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem Ltd. English translation copyright © 1991 by Nicholas De Lange. To be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.*

of his being, insistent yet also abstracted. He stood immobile, with his face toward the shelf and his back to the agent.

"The house," he answered quietly.

"Just like that? Don't you want to see the garden? Or the shed?"

"I said I'll take it."

"And do you agree to a rent of nine hundred dollars per month, payable half-yearly in advance? Repairs and all taxes to be your responsibility?"

"Done."

★ ★ ★

In the car on the way back from the suburb, which was named Ramat Lotan, to the office in the center, on Ibn Gabirol Street, the agent delivered himself of a monologue. He spoke of the housing market, the collapse of the stock market, the new economic policy, which seemed to him to be completely screwed up, and this government that deserved to be you-know-whatted. He explained to Yoel that the owner of the property, a personal acquaintance of his, Yosi Kramer, was a section manager for El Al, who had been suddenly sent off to New York for three years at barely a fortnight's notice, just time to grab the wife and kids and rush off to snatch the apartment of another Israeli, who was moving from Queens to Miami.

The man sitting on his right did not look to him like someone who was likely to change his mind at the last minute: a client who looks at two properties in the space of an hour and a half and then takes the third twenty minutes after setting foot in it, without haggling over the price, wouldn't slip off the hook now. Nevertheless the agent felt a professional duty to continue to convince the silent man sitting beside him that he had got a good bargain. He was also curious to know something about the stranger with the slow movements and the little wrinkles at the eyes that suggested a faintly derisive smile, even though the thin lips did not express so much as the ghost of a smile. And so the agent sang the praises of the property, the advantages of this semi-detached house in an exclusive suburb that had been built the way it should be, "state of the art," as they say. The next-door neighbors are a couple of Americans, brother and sister, good solid people who apparently were sent over to represent some charitable foundation in Detroit. So, peace and quiet are guaranteed. The whole street consists of well-cared-for homes; there is a carport to park the car in; there is a shopping center and a school just a couple of hundred yards from the front door, the sea is a mere twenty minutes away, and the whole city is at your fingertips. The house, as you saw for yourself, is fully furnished and equipped, because the Kramers, the owners, are people who know what quality is, and anyway, with a manager for El Al you can be certain that everything was bought abroad and that it's all a hundred percent, including all the fittings and the gadgets. Anyone can see that you're a man of discernment and also that you know how to make your mind up quickly. If only all my clients were like you—but I've already said that. And what's your line of business, if you don't mind my asking?

Yoel thought about it, as though selecting his words with tweezers. Then he replied:

"I work for the government."

"And your wife? Is she working?"

"She's dead."

"I'm sorry," the agent replied politely. And in his embarrassment he saw fit to add: "My wife also has problems. Splitting headaches, and the doctors can't get to the bottom of it. So what ages are the children?"

Once again Yoel seemed to be checking in his mind the accuracy of the facts and choosing a carefully planned reply:

"Just one daughter. Sixteen and a half."

The agent let out a chuckle and said in a tone of intimacy, eager to forge a bond of male camaraderie with the stranger:

"Not an easy age, eh? Boyfriends, crises, money for clothes, and so on?" And he went on to ask, if it wasn't rude of him, ask in that case why they needed four bedrooms. Yoel did not answer. The agent apologized; of course he knew it was none of his business, it was just, how should he say, idle curiosity. He himself had two boys, aged nineteen and twenty, barely a year and a half between them. Quite a problem. Both in the army, both in combat units. Just as well that screwed-up business in Lebanon's over, assuming it is, only a pity it ended in such a mess, and he says this although he personally is a long way from being a leftist or anything like that. And where do you stand on that business?

"We also have two old ladies." Yoel answered the previous question in his low, even voice. "The grandmothers will be living with us." As though that concluded the conversation, he closed his eyes. Which was where his tiredness had concentrated itself. In his mind for some reason he repeated words the agent had spoken. Boyfriends. Crises. The sea. And the whole city at your fingertips.

★ ★ ★

This is how the disaster had happened. The autumn came and went, and then it was winter. A half-frozen bird appeared on the kitchen balcony. Netta took it to her bedroom and tried to warm it. She boiled maize and fed it water from a dropper. Toward evening the bird recovered its strength and began to flutter around the room emitting desperate chirps. Netta opened the window and the bird flew away. Next morning there were more birds on the branches of the

bare trees. Perhaps the bird was among them. How could one tell? When the electricity went off at 8:30 in the morning on that day of driving rain, Netta was at school and Yoel in another country. It would appear that Ivria, working in the extra room on her dissertation, "The Shame in the Attic: Sex, Love and Money in the Brontë Sisters," found she did not have enough light. Jerusalem was darkened by low clouds and mist. She went outside and down the steps to the car, which was parked in the open basement of the building. Apparently she was intending to fetch from the trunk of the car the powerful flashlight that Yoel had bought in Rome. On her way down she noticed her nightdress on the garden wall, snatched by the wind from the clothes-horse on the balcony. She went across to pick it up. That was how she came upon the high-tension wire. No doubt she mistook it for a clothesline. Or perhaps she correctly identified it as an electrical wire but reasonably assumed that since there was a power cut it would be dead. She reached out to lift it up so that she could cross underneath it. Or perhaps she tripped and stumbled against it. How could one know? But the power cut was not a real power cut; it was only their building that was affected. The cable was live. Because of the humidity it is almost certain that she was electrocuted on the spot and felt no pain. There was another victim, too; Itamar Vitkin, the next-door neighbor, the one from whom Yoel had purchased the room a couple of years before. He was a man in his sixties, who owned a refrigerated truck and had lived alone for several years. His children had grown and moved away and his wife had left him and Jerusalem (which is why he had had no further use for the room and sold it to Yoel). It is conceivable that Itamar Vitkin saw the disaster from his window and hurried downstairs to help. They were found lying in a puddle almost in each other's arms. The man was still alive. At first they tried to apply artificial respiration and even smacked his face hard. He expired in the ambulance on the way to the Hadassah hospital. Among the neighbors an alternative version circulated; Yoel took no notice of it.

The neighbors considered Vitkin rather strange. He would sometimes climb into the cab of his truck at twilight, stick his head and half his clumsy body out the window, and play the guitar for a quarter of an hour to passersby. They were not numerous, since it was a side street. People would stop to listen, and after a couple of minutes they would shrug their shoulders and go on their way. He always worked at night, delivering dairy products to the shops, and came home at seven o'clock in the morning. Summer and winter alike. Through the party wall his voice could be heard sometimes, lecturing the guitar as he played it. His voice was gentle, as though he were wooing a reluctant woman. He was a fat, flabby man, who walked around most of the time in an undershirt and khaki trousers that were too loose for him. He looked like someone who lived in constant fear of having just accidentally done or said something unspeakable. After his meals he used to stand on his balcony and throw crumbs to the birds. He used to coax them softly, too. Sometimes, on summer evenings, he would sit in his grey undershirt on a wicker chair on his balcony playing heartrending Russian tunes that were perhaps originally intended for the balalaika rather than the guitar.

Despite all these eccentricities, he was considered a good neighbor. He never stood for election to the Residents' Committee, yet he volunteered to be a sort of regular duty officer for the entrance hall and stairs. He even bought a pair of potted geraniums out of his own pocket and stood them on either side of the front entrance. If anyone spoke to him, asked him the time, a sweet expression would spread over his face, like a child surprised by a wonderful present. All of which merely aroused a faint impatience in Yoel.

When he died, his three grown-up sons arrived with their wives and lawyers. All those years they had never taken the trouble to visit him. Now they had apparently come to divide the contents of his apartment and to get it ready to be sold. On their return from the funeral, an altercation broke out. Two of the wives had raised their voices, so loudly that the neighbors could hear. Then two or three lawyers arrived, on their own or with a professional assessor. Four months after the calamity, when Yoel had already begun to prepare to leave Jerusalem, the neighbor's apartment was still locked and shuttered and empty. One night Netta imagined she heard sounds of soft music through the wall—not a guitar, but, so she said, perhaps a cello. In the morning she told Yoel, who chose to pass over it in silence. As he often did with things his daughter told him.

In the entrance hall of the building, above the mailboxes, the notice of condolence from the Residents' Committee faded to yellow. Several times Yoel meant to take it down, but he never did. There was a spelling mistake in it. It said that the residents were shocked and shared the sorrow of the respective families on the tragic and premature loss of our dear neighbors Mrs. Ivria Raviv and Mr. Eviatar Vitkin. Raviv was the surname that Yoel used in everyday life. When he rented the new house in Ramat Lotan he chose to call himself Ravid, although there was no logical reason for it. Netta was always Netta Raviv, apart from one year when the three of them had lived in London in connection with Yoel's work under a different name altogether. His mother's name was Lisa Rabinovich. Ivria, for the fifteen years that she had studied, intermittently, at the university, had always used her maiden name, Lublin.

The day before the disaster Yoel had checked in at the Hotel Europa in Helsinki with the name Lionel Hart. However, the middle-aged guitar-loving neighbor whose death in the yard in the rain in the arms of Mrs. Raviv had given rise to various rumors was named Itamar Vitkin. Not Eviatar Vitkin, as the printed notice had it. But Netta said she actually preferred the name Eviatar, and anyway, what difference did it make?

★ ★ ★

In the late afternoon of a summer day, Yoel was standing barefoot in a corner of the lawn, trimming the hedge. In the little street in Ramat Lotan there were agricultural smells, mown lawns, manured flowerbeds, and a light soil that soaked up the water from the sprinklers. There were many sprinklers revolving in the little front and back gardens. It was quarter past five. Occasionally a neighbor would come home from work, park his car, get out unhurriedly, stretch his arms, and loosen his tie even before reaching his paved garden path.

Through the garden doors of the houses opposite could be heard the voice of the man reading the news on television. Here and there neighbors were sitting on the lawn staring indoors at the television in their living room. With a small effort Yoel could catch the man's words. But his thoughts were distracted. At times he would stop clipping and watch three little girls playing on the street with an Alsatian they called Ironside, perhaps after the detective in a wheelchair in a television series a few years back, which Yoel had happened to watch by himself in hotel rooms in various cities. Once he had watched an episode dubbed into Portuguese, and had still managed to follow the plot. Which was a simple one.

All around, birds were singing in the treetops, hopping along the walls, flitting from one garden to the next as though they were intoxicated with joy. Even though Yoel knew that birds do not flit for joy but for other reasons. Far away like the sighing of the sea sounded the din of heavy traffic on the highway that ran below Ramat Lotan. In a glider behind him lay his mother, wearing a housecoat, reading the evening paper. Once, years before, she had told him how when he was three years old she had trundled him, in a squeaking carriage, completely buried and hidden under packages and bundles hastily thrown together, for hundreds of miles from Bucharest to the port of Varna. Most of the way she had fled along remote side roads. Nothing remained in his memory, but he had a faded image of a dark dormitory in the bowels of a ship, packed with tier upon tier of iron beds crammed with men and women groaning, spitting, perhaps vomiting over each other, or over him. And a vague picture of a fight, scratching and biting till the blood ran, between his shrieking mother and a bald, unshaven man on that same terrible voyage. His father he could not remember at all, even though he knew what he looked like from the two sepia pictures in his mother's old photograph album and he knew, or had inferred, that his father was not a Jew, but a Christian Romanian who had walked out of his life and his mother's even before the Germans arrived. But in his thoughts the father took on the appearance of the bald, unkempt man in the ship who had hit his mother.

On the other side of the hedge, which he was trimming slowly and precisely, his neighbors, the American brother and sister who occupied the other half of the double house, were sitting on white garden chairs drinking iced coffee. Several times during the weeks since their arrival the Vermonts had invited him to drop in with the ladies one afternoon for iced coffee or else to watch a comedy on their VCR one evening after the nine o'clock news. Yoel had said: "We'd like that." Meanwhile he had not done so. Vermont was a fresh-looking, pink, heavy man, with the rough manner of a farmer. He looked like a healthy, wealthy Dutchman in an advertisement for expensive cigars. He was jovial and loud. Loud perhaps because he was hard of hearing. His sister was at least ten years younger than he, Annemarie or Rosemarie; Yoel could not remember which. A petite, attractive woman, with childlike laughing blue eyes and pointed breasts. "Hi," she said cheerily when she noticed Yoel eyeing her body over the hedge. Her brother repeated the same syllable, a split-second later and a touch less cheerily. Yoel wished them a good afternoon. The woman came over the hedge, her nipples visible under a light cotton blouse. When she got close to him, delightedly intercepting the look that was fixed on her, she added in English, speaking quickly in a low voice: "Tough life, huh?" Louder, in Hebrew, she asked if she could borrow his shears later so that she could trim the ligustrum hedge on their side too. Yoel said: "Why not?" And after a slight hesitation he offered to do it himself. "Careful." She laughed. "I might say yes."

The late-afternoon light was gentle, honeyed, casting a strange golden glow on a few semi-transparent clouds that were passing overhead on their way from the sea to the mountains. For a slight breeze had blown up from the sea, bringing a salty tang and a faint shade of melancholy. Which Yoel did not reject. The breeze rustled in the foliage of the ornamental and fruit trees, caressed the well-kept lawns, and splashed his bare chest with tiny droplets from a sprinkler in another garden.

Instead of finishing his side of the hedge and going next door, as he had promised, to trim the other side, Yoel put the shears down on the edge of the lawn and went for a little stroll, as far as the point where the

street was blocked by a fenced citrus grove. He stood there for a few minutes, staring at the dense foliage, vainly straining to decipher a silent movement that he imagined he could discern in the depths of the grove. Until his eyes ached again. Then he turned around and walked home. It was a tender evening. From a window of one of the other houses he heard a woman saying, "So what; tomorrow is another day." Yoel checked this sentence in his mind and found no error in it. At the entrances to the gardens were stylish, occasionally even ostentatious, mailboxes. Some of the parked cars still gave off residual heat from the engine and a faint smell of burned gasoline. Even the street, made of precast squares of concrete, radiated a warmth, which was pleasing under his bare feet. Each square bore a stamp in the form of two arrows flanking the inscription SCHARFSTEIN LTD RAMAT GAN.

Some time after six o'clock his mother-in-law and his daughter returned in the car from the hairdresser's. Avigail, despite her mourning, struck him as healthy and applelike: her round face and sturdy body suggested a prosperous Slavic peasant woman. She was so unlike Ivria that for a moment he had difficulty remembering what his connection was with this woman. His daughter had had her hair cut boyishly short, bristly like a hedgehog, as though to defy him. Netta did not ask what he thought, and Yoel decided not to say a word this time either. When they were both indoors, Yoel went over to the car, which Avigail had parked sloppily, started it, reversed out of the drive, turned around at the bottom of the street, and backed into the drive so that the car now stood precisely in the center of the carport, facing the street, ready to go. He stood for a few minutes at the gate of his house as though waiting to see who else would turn up. Softly he whistled an old tune. He could not remember precisely where it came from but he vaguely remembered that it was from a well-known musical, and he turned to go indoors to ask but recalled that Ivria was not there and that was why they were here. Because for a moment it had not been clear to him what he was actually doing in this strange place.

By now it was seven o'clock. Time for a brandy. Tomorrow, he reminded himself, was another day. Enough.

He went inside and had a leisurely shower. Meanwhile his mother-in-law and his mother prepared the supper. Netta was reading in her room and did not join them. Through her closed door she answered that she would eat something later.

By half past seven the dusk was beginning to spread. Shortly before eight he went outside to lie on the glider, clutching a transistor radio and a book and the new reading glasses that he had been using for a few weeks now. He had chosen a pair of ridiculous black-framed glasses that made him look like an elderly French priest. In the sky strange reflections were still flickering, the last remnant of the day that was ending, while a cruel red moon suddenly rose beyond the citrus grove. Opposite, behind the cypress trees and tiled roofs, the sky reflected the glare of the lights of Tel Aviv and for a moment Yoel felt that he must get up and go there now, right away, to bring his daughter back. But she was in her room. The light of her bedside lamp shining through her window into the garden cast a shape onto the lawn, which Yoel, contemplating it for several minutes, attempted in vain to define. Perhaps because it was not a geometric shape.

The mosquitoes were beginning to bother him. He went indoors, remembering to take with him the transistor, the book, the round black-framed glasses, aware that he had forgotten something but unable to recall what it was.

In the living room, still barefoot, he poured himself a brandy and sat down with his mother and his mother-in-law to watch the nine o'clock news. It would be possible to sever the predator from its metal base with a single moderate jerk, and so, if not to decipher, at least to silence it, but afterward, he knew, he would have to mend it. And that he could do only by drilling into the paw and putting a screw through it. Perhaps it would be better not to touch it.

He stood up and went out onto the terrace. Outside the crickets were already chirruping. The breeze had dropped. Choruses of frogs filled the grove down the street, a child was crying, a woman laughed, a mouth organ spread sadness, water roared in the bathroom. The houses had been built very close together and the gardens between them were small. Ivria had had a dream: when she completed her thesis and Netta finished school and Yoel was discharged from the service, they would sell the apartment in Talbiyeh and the grandmothers' apartment in Rehavia and buy themselves a house at the edge of a village in the Judean Hills, not too far from Jerusalem. It had to be an end house; that was important. So that at least on one side the windows would look out onto wooded hills with no sign of life. Now he had managed to realize at least some of the components of this plan. Even though the two apartments in Jerusalem had been rented, not sold. The income was sufficient to pay the rent of this house in Ramat Lotan, and there was even a little to spare. There was also his monthly pension and the old ladies' savings and their National Security money. And there was Ivria's inheritance too, an extensive plot of land in the township of Metullah on which Nakdimon Lublin and his sons grew fruit, and had recently also built a small guesthouse. Every month they transferred a third of the proceeds to his account. It was among those fruit trees that he had first had Ivria, in 1960, when he was a

soldier who had lost his way during an orienteering exercise during a section commander's training course and she was a farmer's daughter two years older than he who had gone out in the dark to turn off the irrigation taps. Both of them were startled, but, total strangers to each other, they had barely exchanged ten words in the darkness before their bodies suddenly clung, groping, rolling in the mud fully dressed, panting, burrowing into each other like a pair of blind puppies, hurting each other, finishing almost before they had begun and then fleeing almost without a word and going their separate ways. And it was also there among the fruit trees that he had had her for the second time, when, as though bewitched, he had returned to Metullah a few months later and lain in wait for her for two nights by the irrigation taps, until they met and fell on each other again and he asked for her hand and she said, Are you out of your mind. After that they used to meet at the cafeteria in the bus station at Kiryat Schmonah and make love in an abandoned tin shack he had discovered in a place where there had been an immigrant transit camp. After six months or so she gave in and married him without reciprocating love but devotedly, honestly, determined to give her full share and try to give more. They were both capable of compassion and gentleness. When they made love they no longer hurt each other but strove to be attentive and generous. Teaching and learning. Getting close. Not pretending. Yet there were times, even after ten years, when they made love again fully dressed in some field in Jerusalem, on the hard earth in places from which they could see only stars and shadows of trees. So whence this feeling that had been with him all evening that he had forgotten something?

After the news he tapped gently on Netta's door again. There was no answer, so he waited and tried again. Here too, as in Jerusalem, it was Netta who had been given the master bedroom with its double bed. Here she hung her pictures of poets and installed her musical scores and vases of thistles. It was he who had decided on this arrangement, because he had difficulty getting sleep in a double bed, whereas it was good for Netta, with her condition, to sleep on a wide bed.

The two grandmothers had settled into the two children's bedrooms, which were joined by a communicating door. And he had taken for himself the room at the back of the house that had been Mr. Kramer's study. In the built-in wardrobe, he hung up his clothes and some of Ivria's, whatever he had not donated after her death to the leper hospital next to their apartment in Jerusalem. He put his safe in this room too, without bothering to fix it into the floor, because there was almost nothing left in it now: when he retired from the service he had been careful to return the guns and the rest of the stuff to the office. Including his own handgun. The lists of telephone numbers he had destroyed. Only the town plans and his real passport remained, for some reason, locked in the safe.

He knocked a third time and, receiving no answer, he opened the door and went in. His daughter, angular, gaunt, her hair cropped almost to the skull, with one of her legs dangling to the floor as though she meant to stand up, exposing her bony knee, was lying asleep with her open book concealing her face. He carefully removed the book. He managed to take off her glasses without waking her, folded them, and put them down on the bedside table. They had transparent plastic frames. Gently, very patiently, he raised the dangling leg and laid it straight on the bed. Then he covered the frail, angular body with a sheet. He lingered for a moment to inspect the pictures of poets on the wall. Amir Gilboa offered him the ghost of a smile. Yoel turned his back and put out the light and left the room. As he did so he heard her drowsy voice in the darkness. She said: "Turn the light out, for God's sake." And although there was no light left in the room to turn out, Yoel did not remonstrate, but soundlessly pulled the door to behind him. Only then did he remember what it was that had been bothering him vaguely all evening: when he had stopped clipping the hedge and gone out for his walk, he had left the garden shears outside on the edge of the lawn. It would not do them any good to be out all night in the dew. He put his sandals on and went out into the garden and saw a pale ring around the full moon, whose color now was not purply red but silvery white. He could hear the chorus of crickets and frogs from the direction of the citrus grove. And the blood-curdling shriek that burst simultaneously from every television set on the street. Then he noted the swish of sprinklers and the hum of distant traffic on the main road and a door slamming in one of the other houses. Quietly he said to himself, in English, the words he had heard from his neighbor: "Tough life, huh?" Instead of going back indoors he put his hand in his pocket. Because he found the keys there he got into the car and drove off. When he returned at one o'clock in the morning the street was quiet and his house too was dark and silent. He got undressed and lay down, put on the stereophonic earphones, and until two or half past listened to a sequence of short baroque pieces and read a few pages of the unfinished thesis. The three Brontë sisters, he discovered, had had two older sisters, who both died in 1825. There was also a consumptive, alcoholic brother by the name of Patrick Branwell. He read until his eyes closed. In the morning it was his mother who went out to pick up the morning paper from the garden path and put the shears back in their place in the shed. □

MUSIC REVIEW

Yemen Tree, Very Pretty

Norman Weinstein

Fifty Gates of Wisdom: Yemenite Songs by Ofra Haza. Shanachie LP 64002.

The Yemenite Jews by Various Artists. Auvidis/UNESCO CD 8024.

Take the punning heading of this review seriously: this is *quite* pretty music, both in traditional and contemporary pop music forms. Yet it is difficult to find on commercial recordings. *Fifty Gates of Wisdom,* an album by Ofra Haza, Israel's reigning pop music chanteuse, is what has recently given Yemenite music visibility in the world marketplace.

After releasing a score of albums filled with pop-disco confections, Haza turned to her Yemenite past and created *Fifty Gates of Wisdom.* The album consists of eight poems by Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, a sixteenth-century kabbalistic scholar—set to dance music. Shabazi's cryptic poems have been sung for centuries by Yemenite Jews in a musical style known as *diwan,* a devotional song that merged aspects of secular and sacred life and was often performed at festive occasions by male singers, a dance music drawing from various Arab musical traditions.

Haza revolutionized the Yemenite *diwan:* simply rendering it in her lovely woman's voice marked one break with tradition, while her disco-like musical arrangements—replete with synthesizers, drum machines, and a string section—represented another. She rocked this kabbalistic poetic/musical form, danced it, dynamized it by eroticizing it, yet her album maintained a devout spiritual focus. There is nothing in the body of recorded Jewish music—or world pop music—exactly like *Fifty Gates of Wisdom.* Alas, her two albums released since in the U.S. sound like so much faceless American rock. Their only claim to distinction is their Hebrew lyrics. But *Fifty Gates of Wisdom,* to use the most commonplace kabbalistic metaphor, ignites sparks enough to set fire to the night sky.

There is no better way to appreciate Haza's achievement than to listen to her version of "Tzur Menti." (Full translations of Shabazi's poems can be found on the album sleeve.) The poem reads: "Rock of my existence,/You are the object of my desire/And of all that I have,/You are my claim to Holiness." The full-throated delivery, luminous with intense desire, makes her vocals instantly mesmerizing. Then you begin to notice the drums that accompany her singing—petrol cans, as clamorous as Trinidadian steel drums—and the synthesizer and strings that sweeten the musical mix. It is oddly suitable for both spiritual meditation and the frenzy of a disco.

You'll find the same songs on *The Yemenite Jews,* a compilation of field recordings of traditional Yemenite Jewish music, collected by Israel's National Sound Archive and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. First issued as an LP under the UNESCO imprint, it has now been reissued as a CD. This is Haza's material dressed in its traditional garb. In fact, over half of the eleven tunes represented on this disc are *diwan* with texts by Shabazi. Forget the electronic instrumentation, there are no slick studio productions here. But a few similarities remain: the rhythmically electrifying petrol-can drums and strong vocals, for example. Tsadoq Tsubeiri is clearly not a professional singer like Haza, but his performance is as devoutly moving as hers, with grand vocal arabesques and danceable rhythms abounding.

In either guise, this music will come as a delightful surprise to listeners most familiar with the Eastern European modes of Jewish music. It embodies a rich drum sound found in North African sacred music, and the vocal styles connect it to any number of Islamic musical schools. Shabazi's lyrics possess a mystical-erotic undercurrent parallel to that found in the troubadour songs of southern Europe.

Yemenite Jews suffered numerous restrictions under conservative Arab leaders.

This should not be a surprising parallel, since Jewish mystics and scholars expelled from Spain during the fifteenth century found their way to Yemen in significant numbers. Many prospered there, both economically and culturally, under the protection of the Ottoman empire. In Shabazi's seventeenth-century Yemen, music and poetry were widely cultivated, their themes reflecting messianic expectations, the pain of exile, and hope for redemption. Central to Jewish Yemenite poetry was the metaphor of sexual intercourse between husband and wife as symbolic of the union between the soul and God, between the Jew and the Promised Land. Like much kabbalistic literature, Yemenite letters attempted to approximate the tone of ecstatic spiritual union by referring to that earthly experience of lovers that most closely touches mystical heights.

The erotic metaphor can be traced to the kabbalist Isaac Luria. Or could it be that the troubadour sensibility flowering in Europe four centuries before his birth colored Luria's writing? A little leap of imagination is required to link Shabazi with the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn (1150–80), another poet driven by the vicissitudes of sexual and spiritual passions. Here is an

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

excerpt from a Ventadorn song translated by Frederick Golden:

> Since I am involved in madness,
> I would really be mad if I did not choose
> of these two evils the lesser one;
> for it is better—I see it clearly now—
> to have a half of her
> than lose her altogether by my raging.

And here is Shabazi's "Lefelach Harimon," as translated by Karen Barak and performed by Ofra Haza:

> Sand-Lily of the Sharon, Rose of the Valley
> She slipped through my aching fingers,
> With her head upturned,
> And left only the pain
> Of my shrinking heart,
> No bandages will heal the wounds
> Inflicted upon my longing heart.

Both songs focus upon longing raised to a fever pitch, passion and maddening frustration of desire commingling, sacred and secular imagery inextricably fused. But while the troubadours often selected an actual woman as the locus for poetic imagination, the Jewish Yemenite poet-singers like Shabazi superimposed a woman's image upon the Messiah, the Promised Land, the human soul.

After the liberal Ottoman Empire began to fade at the end of the seventeenth century, Yemenite Jews suffered numerous restrictions under conservative Arab leaders. Musical instruments, including the lute that traditionally accompanied the troubadours' songs, were forbidden to them. Hence the development of metal cans as drums. Shabazi's songs were transformed inadvertently, by this edict, into prayer-poems drummed into being.

This percussive understanding of prayer is one of this music's salient characteristics. Although no longer confined to Yemen alone, *diwan* is about praising God through song, dance, and romantic love. Further, it is about enduring whatever suffering the world offers devout Jews for the sake of the redemption of Israel. Shabazi knew firsthand this suffering for the sake of ecstatic union with God. He lived through the expulsion of the Jews from the Yemenite capital city of San'a and often laments the sufferings his people had to endure.

But Shabazi's songs are radiantly infused with the will to transcend such suffering. Repeated listenings to the UNESCO disc finally brought home what this music recalled in my past: the singing and clapping accompanying the movement of the Torah around the synagogue during the Simchas Torah service of my own childhood. Yemenite *diwan* performances are indeed foot-stomping affairs, ecstatic celebrations of God's word setting the heart ablaze and the feet in motion.

Let critics argue over which of these recordings most "purely" captures the spirit of Yemenite Jewish music. Get both. These musical branchings of the Yemen tree of wisdom are too exquisite to miss. □

BOOK REVIEW

Ask Ms. Science

Joan Scott

The Politics of Women's Biology by Ruth Hubbard. Rutgers University Press, 1990, 229 pp.

Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science by Donna Haraway. Routledge, 1989, 486 pp.

Feminism is a reform program, a movement for fundamental change, the expression of a political identity, and above all, a critique of knowledge and its production. The last is its most radical dimension, since it calls into question many of the founding assumptions upon which social institutions are based, especially the idea that such differences as race, gender, and sexuality are natural and immutable. Indeed, it is around the question of difference that feminism has made a distinctive contribution to contemporary philosophical debates about meaning, truth, and objectivity.

A focus on women has disrupted old ways of thinking based on generalizations about the universal nature of "Man" or the "Human." It has made difference a historical question, and so challenged the surprisingly immutable bases on which social, political, economic, professional, and other distinctions stand, the terms by which differentials of power are maintained, and the standards that determine what counts as knowledge.

The impact of academic feminism has varied across the disciplines. It has probably made greatest headway in literary studies, where feminist theory and analyses of gender figure significantly in graduate training, undergraduate courses, and scholarly books and articles—even those written by non-feminists. In history, a thriving subfield of feminist scholarship has taken root, but it remains decidedly marginal to the mainstream. The status of feminist work in anthropology is similar to history; in sociology, political science, and economics it is much worse. In fact, the closer one gets to disciplines based on scientific models, the more difficult it is for feminists to be taken seriously; their critique of objectivity, excellence, and genius seems to put them outside the community of rational discourse whose members conduct and protect the scientific enterprise.

Denunciation and neglect have not,

Joan Scott is a professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study. She is the author of Gender and the Politics of History *(Columbia University Press, 1988).*

however, deterred feminists from making resourceful and imaginative attempts to provide a critique of science. Their strategies vary, revealing a great deal not only about the range and variety of feminist approaches to "the science question," but also about the difficulties of dismantling the edifice of science itself. Feminist arguments are characterized by an effort to both challenge and remain within the discourse of science, a discourse premised on the belief that a fundamental opposition exists between Man (the knower, the scientist) and Nature (what is to be known).

Thus, historians have uncovered past practices of institutional discrimination, conclusively proving (with empirical evidence and thus a certain scientific clout) that doing science and being female are not antithetical, that only a pervasive determination to exclude women obscured or prevented their participation. This argument in no way questions the reigning opposition between Man and Nature; it simply pluralizes "Man."

To counter the implicit notion that men and women do the same thing when they do science, some scholars hold that there are cognitive differences between the sexes. They invoke various psychological theories to explain women's exclusion as the result of the dominance of masculine models that undervalue more relational, intuitive, or subjective ways of knowing. Some of these critics not only challenge but invert the prevailing hierarchy, which equates good science with masculine traits of objectivity and rationality, insisting instead that scientific inquiry yields better results when one has a more feminine "feeling for the organism." Although this argument implies that gender and social position influence styles of scientific perception, it does not directly call into question the status of Nature as something out there, existing apart from our investigations, and ultimately knowable.

Yet another type of feminist critique focuses on studies of women and gender, insisting that scientific description in this area is generally self-interested and biased, imposing social and cultural stereotypes on, and therefore obscuring, the actual and usually quite complex meanings of physical phenomena. The remedy offered is greater objectivity, better science that gets closer to the truth by taking fuller account of women's experience. This approach explicitly endorses the Man/Nature dichotomy. Still other feminist critics have questioned whether objectivity can exist at all, refusing the suggestion that more rigorous methods can correct tendencies to bias, and thus rejecting the belief that Nature exists apart from or in opposition to what is known about it. Knowledge is inevitably social and cultural, they maintain, whether its object is art, society, or the natural world. Therefore, science is necessarily an interpretive activity.

For anyone who thinks of her or himself as a scientist, however, the extreme relativism implied by the critique of objectivity is difficult to maintain. Biologist Ruth Hubbard, whose book sometimes suggests that science is only a collection of stories, repeatedly denies that such stories are the final word. "Try as I will to adopt a relativism that acknowledges different ways of interpreting nature," she writes, "the scientist in me insists on trying to distinguish between more and less accurate representations of nature and social reality." In her experience, feminism leads to better science:

> I consider myself a scientist because I am keenly curious about nature and want to understand how it works.... I stand with those who argue that the political insights feminism provides can lead us to more accurate, hence truer, accounts of nature than we now have.

For Hubbard, feminism's attention to difference, to multiple points of view, and to variability, expands the knowledge base of science. Reductive science (which seeks single causes and makes universal generalizations) comes from a narrow group of researchers, usually working in male-dominated institutions, whose unexamined ideologies shore up their dominance over women and nature—in much the same manner that Darwinism did in the Victorian era. Ultimately, she writes, feminism is a voice for a more democratic science because it insists on attention to the needs and experiences of a group fundamentally different from the dominant one. It is thus a force for social and political responsibility.

Indeed, it is the question of political responsibility that most preoccupies Hubbard. Who decides, and on what basis, she asks, that millions of dollars be spent for reproductive technologies that benefit relatively few, while large numbers of people still need basic medical care? What does it mean that male doctors have redefined women's bodies as fetal "environments," and how has that affected attention to maternal rights in the abortion controversy? What is the difference, she asks rhetorically, between the current preoccupation with producing perfect babies and Nazi eugenic policies? How are scientific priorities determined and by whom? Hubbard's answers to these questions are provocative and disturbing. They lead her to call for an end to the monopoly of the biological sciences by an elite of highly paid (and overwhelmingly male and white) experts and to demand that scientists be accountable to the public for the uses to which their work is put.

Does Nature exist apart from our stories? Is there good and bad, more and less accurate science?

These proposals, while desirable, seem vulnerable to the charge of utopianism—are there ways in which popular input into choices about funding, research priorities, and the application of new procedures can be arranged? Who would decide these questions? Is the public's choice inevitably going to be what Hubbard would consider morally or politically appropriate? Can this kind of input be effective in the face of the enormous power science claims for itself through its specialized knowledge of Nature, a claim Hubbard's book has criticized but not entirely abandoned? Does Nature exist apart from our stories? Is there good and bad, more and less accurate science? Can we judge it apart from its political consequences? Hubbard's book shows how hard it is to mount a convincing critique when one stays within the terms of the Man/Nature opposition. Something else seems called for—something that can radically dismantle the opposition itself.

That something else is attempted by Donna Haraway in her bold and brilliant book, *Primate Visions*. Haraway's main concern is to illustrate how the meaning of science itself has been constructed in the articulation of such antinomies as Nature versus culture, human versus animal, organic versus inorganic. These are not self-evident categories, nor are the boundaries between them permanently fixed. Instead, the boundaries are constantly negotiated, the negotiations are deeply embedded in a range of discourses, and science (especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) has offered itself as the language of negotiation. As such, science is not outside this process, but constituted through it. No outside position exists for either science or Nature; the relationship is not between active knowers and passive facts waiting to be discovered. Instead, Haraway conceives of Nature as an agent in "non-reductionist modes of knowing that insist on complexity and non-binary, interactionist relationships of subjects and objects of knowledge."

Primatology is the field she uses to explore this process. It is a particularly compelling, multilayered example. The "almost human" qualities of monkeys and apes create an ambiguity that cries out for resolution. That search produces systematic attempts to distinguish animal from human, to explore human origins, and to discover the supposed universal drives believed to produce families and societies. Race and gender are central to the study of monkeys and apes. The high concentration of primates in Africa and the preponderance of white Western researchers in this field provide insights into the operations of imperialism and its post–World War II legacies. Precisely because of its ambiguity, primatology has not been a coherent, neatly contained field. Conflicts and disagreements have riddled its history, subfields have proliferated, contradictory theories abound. Ample material, in other words, for demonstrating the many ways in which science operates as "a contested narrative field."

There is so much material, in fact, that it escapes conventional modes of presentation. The first two parts of Haraway's book are roughly chronological, divided by World War II. But the impression is not cumulative; the discussions of change are not orderly. It is true that some notions (such as the vision of universal man, or man the hunter) gained extraordinary predominance for a period of time, but even these were repeatedly contested, modified, discarded, or transformed. The scope of the book is so broad because primate studies intersect with a range of contemporary social and political preoccupations: urban decadence, human engineering, communication systems, male dominance, family order, maternal instinct, and more. Much of the power of the book comes from Haraway's ability to point out connections among these topics that one usually doesn't see, to move fearlessly across fields usually treated separately, to find meaning in improbable associations and so to create new kinds of understanding. It is fascinating, for example, to comprehend the conceptual difficulties involved in teaching chimps raised by humans to "return" to the wild, or to go beyond the literal details of the lives and work of Jane Goodall or Diane Fossey and to think of their impact in symbolic terms: as white women attempting racial reconciliation (the women stand, in a rough, unconscious iconography, for white civilization, the monkeys for blacks, Africans, the colonized) in the edenic groves of post-imperialist Africa. The lines between Man and Nature become confused in these accounts (Haraway means them to) and pat, univocal reflections about the influence of culture *on* science begin to seem problematic. Reading *Primate Visions,* one begins to see how fruitless it is to divide cognition into separable categories.

The third section of the book departs from chronology to take up the work of feminist primatologists, themselves a disparate set of individuals working under vastly different theoretical assumptions, who have challenged some of the reigning paradigms of their fields. Haraway examines how these challenges are produced, and their potential prospects for shaking up the disciplinary power structure. Even working within the hyperindividualist logic of sociobiology, feminists like Sarah Hrdy have upset the received knowledge that casts males as the sole agents of species reproduction because of their supposed desire to maximize their genetic legacy. By paying attention to primate female orgasms, Hrdy makes a strong case for female agency in evolution, for a separate female interest in reproductive strategies. Feminism, according to Haraway, enabled women such as Hrdy to formulate hypotheses and to study primate behaviors that disrupted existing perspectives, "not by replacing feminist stories for masculinist ones, or scientific stories for ideological ones, truths for representations, but by restructuring the whole field of possible stories."

In a sense, that is Haraway's accomplishment in *Primate Visions*. It is a sprawling book that is sometimes repetitious and overly detailed. Its multiple agendas are not always synchronized, indeed they are often tersely but productively juxtaposed. These qualities seem to me inevitable in a work that casts itself as a subversive intervention in the history of science. Its central achievement, the deconstruction of the opposition between Man and Nature, is surely also its most troubling, for it rests not on a single response, but on a double one. The answer to the question "Is there a Nature to be studied?" is "Yes, but." For what is studied, and how, cannot be an objective inquiry into something "out there." Rather, what gets studied establishes what will count as "Nature," and the point is that this is never fixed or settled apart from ongoing, changing, and conflict-ridden scientific activity conducted in conjunction with nonhuman beings and objects. Haraway wants to recast science as a collaborative project rather than an asymmetrical one (in which Man knows, that is dominates, Nature). She wants to remind scientists that they are actively producing knowledge and that they must be held accountable for the knowledge they produce. This seems to be an important reconceptualization. It acknowledges that, while there is much scientific work to be done, scientists should always be aware that they are not simply studying Nature, but determining what it is. □

Book Review

Poetic Compulsive

Sven Birkerts

Parables and Portraits by Stephen Mitchell. Harper & Row, 1990, 87 pp.

The Want Bone by Robert Pinsky. Ecco Press, 1990, 70 pp.

Stephen Mitchell, who has secured a reputation in recent years as one of our most gifted and necessary translators (of the *Tao Te Ching* and *The Book of Job,* as well as the core prose and poetry of the enormous Rilke œuvre), has now shed the medium's veil to declare himself a poet in his own right. His debut volume, *Parables and Portraits,* has much to show about the freedoms —and hazards—facing the spiritually inclined artist in our day.

As may be expected, Mitchell's idiom has been significantly shaped by the texts he has so devotedly translated. He strives throughout to forge (or mime) a pellucid, uncluttered telling style, to find a voice that can speak openly of first and last things; he would stand far to the side of the excesses and agitations that must afflict more time-bound styles and usages. Fittingly, Mitchell opts, as his title indicates, to approach his subject matter strictly by way of parables and portraits. The sixty-nine poems and prose poems gathered here either filter and reframe episodes familiar from mythological, religious, and more secular sources (the resurrection of Lazarus, the binding of Isaac, the myth of Sisyphus, etc.); or else they ring sly and sometimes obvious changes on the lives of historical subjects (Spinoza, Kafka, Montaigne, Vermeer). The former approach is distinctively—though not exclusively—Rilkean (think of the celebrated "Orpheus, Euridice, Hermes"), while the latter has become a staple of the late modernist tradition.

While Mitchell is no Rilke—he cannot approach his master's absolute austerity of focus—he can, at his best, set down a clear and evocative narrative. The effect is often winning: a familiar or habitual response is nudged in the direction of mystery. We are not overwhelmed; more likely we are tickled awake. Here for instance is the prose poem "Great-Grandfather Chang":

> At last! An ancestor who understands.
>
> It is 1910. He has taken off his identity as editor of the Shanghai *Times,* put on a spiffy new black silk *minàp* and a kind of squarish silk yarmulke, and gone down to the photographer's studio in search of a metaphor. He has no idea that in forty years his great-granddaughter will be born across the ocean or that in seventy-eight years his great-grandson-in-law will be staring, in huge admiration, at the faded trick photo, in which, both guest and host, he is seated benignly on a mahogany throne, and is also kneeling at his own feet, palms together in supplication. In case I didn't get the point, down the right side of the picture he has indulgently written, in nine finely brushed characters which I can't read: "Whatever you require, the only one who can give it is yourself." Both faces are smiling.

The piece manifests a Zen-like love of paradox, and wisely curtails its reach. The wit of the last sentence stays beautifully to the scale of the conceit. We accept the proferred nugget, uncertain as to whether we should examine it or hide it in a pocket. Mitchell has, with the simplest of means, intimated a great deal about the legacies that link generations. The great-grandfather seems to anticipate the eye of futurity; his great-grandson-in-law cocks an archaeologist's eye. The distance between them disappears in a moment of recognition. Odds are, however, that the piece could not be made to work as a poem—there is little hint of any lyrical undercurrent. Indeed, it must be said that Mitchell works best when unhampered by the demands of lineation. The poems have a provisional feel that derives, at least in part, from an absence of linguistic momentum; their shape is determined more by narrative than rhythmic requirements.

But Mitchell, as if to distance himself somewhat from the great artisans of the parable (Rilke, Kafka), has also adopted another approach to the same material. He is very nearly systematic in his way of interjecting slapstick turns or unexpected colloquialisms into contexts that are otherwise serious. In his poem "Tao-Chi," for example, he writes:

> Dressed in his long, white, long-sleeved,
> blue-sashed holiday robe,
> with a fashionably wispy beard
> and some kind of Confucian doodad
> on his head (it looks like a lantern),
> the poet stands, face slightly tilted
> upward, in the little grove.

And the final short section of his "Job" abruptly turns the piece into stand-up shtick:

> "In any case," the friends said on their way home, "his offensiveness has not diminished. A miracle is no cure for bad breath."

No, indeed. But *who cares?*

A poet working the limitless field of the reimagined episode or life must always be on guard against the post-modern bacillus. In the realm of free choice, arbitrariness is the hardest temptation to resist. It is not enough that a poem be merely interesting or clever—it must carry, as a kind of specific gravity, the sense of its own

---

Sven Birkerts is the author of The Electric Life: Essays on Modern Poetry *(William Morrow, 1989).*

inevitability. Skilled as he is, Mitchell shows through repeated swerves and missteps that he is not yet listening in to hear language at the level where the fitness between rhythm, sound, and semantic purpose certifies that the true artistic apprehension has taken place. His work is still that item he names so tellingly in his poem "Kafka": "a palimpsest / with the faint traces / of somebody else's writing."

Robert Pinsky is an instructive counter-instance. For if anyone in his generation is working to find and hew to that expressive inevitability, it is this poet. As his latest collection, *The Want Bone,* demonstrates over and over, Pinsky will heed the imperatives of his muse even when they lead him into the unfashionable and difficult. Which is what much of this book is; which is also the very thing that gives it the peculiar force it possesses, a force that grows with each new reading.

One needs but an unstopped ear in order to grasp with what force of compulsion the poet feels his words.

Like Mitchell, Pinsky is drawn to reflect upon first and last things. Like Mitchell, too, his work shows traces of influence from a poet he has translated: his detached vantage and his vision of the relentlessness of historical process owe a good deal to the example of Czeslaw Milosz. But beyond that, similarities between Mitchell and Pinsky disappear. Where Mitchell searches laterally through traditions and mythologies, encompassing everything from the Chinese mystics to Freud, Pinsky burrows straight down to seek out a single elusive root. Whatever may happen from one line to the next in his poems, we never lose the sense that the poet is obeying a single spiritual drive.

Pinsky is not interested in working in imitation of parables and sacred texts—he has the temerity to step in and create them afresh. And, like Milosz, he seems to have acquired the authority of his utterance. He will, where necessary, even raise his language to the charged level of the prophetic, risking the charge of irrationality (for what is prophecy but the willed imposition of the absurd upon human affairs?). Indeed, it is precisely this prophecy's stolid obscurity that argues its rightness, its necessity.

Pinsky launches his book with a straightforwardly ingenuous, overtly apocryphal, but for all that strangely moving poem entitled "From the Childhood of Jesus." The poem relates, in couplet stanzas, how as a young child Jesus fashioned twelve sparrows from the river clay and set them to flight; how "a certain Jew" reproached Joseph for the boy's profanation of the Sabbath; how Jesus got angry at the son of Annas the scribe for breaking a dam he had made and called out that the boy should wither:

> At once, the boy was all withered.
> His parents moaned,
> The Jews gasped, Jesus began to
> leave, then turned
> And prophesied, his child's face
> wet with tears:
> "Twelve times twelve times twelve
> thousands of years
>
> Before these heavens and this
> earth were made,
> The Creator set a jewel in the
> throne of God
>
> With Hell on the left and Heaven
> to the right,
> The Sanctuary in front, and
> behind, an endless night
>
> Endlessly fleeing a Torah written
> in flame.
> And on that jewel in the throne,
> God wrote my name."

Jesus and the family of the withered boy then return to their homes. Pinsky concludes:

> Alone in his cot in Joseph's house,
> the Son
> Of Man was crying himself to
> sleep. The moon
>
> Rose higher, the Jews put out their
> lights and slept,
> And all was calm and as it had
> been, except
>
> In the agitated household of the
> scribe Annas,
> And high in the dark, where
> unknown even to Jesus
>
> The twelve new sparrows flew
> aimlessly through the night,
> Not blinking or resting, as if
> never to alight.

Pinsky's young Jesus is very nearly a despot, flaunting the power of his investiture. His child's rage has burned through the fabric of the pious. The twelve new sparrows fly "aimlessly through the night," slivers of a potency that must at times act unchecked. The meaning of the poem is not anything that can be formulated or held; it is a piece of desire, testing—then asserting—freedom. The rhythms, meanwhile, modulate with great sensitivity to amplify the play between the hammer blows of prophecy ("Gód wróte mý náme") and the more erratic drift of the spontaneously created birds ("And not blínking or résting, as if néver to alíght").

Pinsky offers his reader many such encounters, some shaped as paradox, others as purely irrational declarations. His lines emerge compellingly from some center of authority—declamatory, brooking no rhythmic opposition—and refuse the conventional appeals to reason. They are like those contradictions that Simone Weil called the "lever[s] of transcendence."

A number of the poems—and one lengthy, entirely perplexing, prose piece—take up themes of a biblical nature. But some of Pinsky's other inclusions—"The Want Bone," "Shiva and Parvati Hiding in the Rain," "The Refinery"—make it clear that his spiritual vision is more encompassing, and more abstract, than any one faith can accommodate. The title poem, for instance, celebrates the emblem of "The dried mouthbones of a shark." The rigor and rough austerity of the description suggest that the bone is seen as but a cipher for the universal play of forces underlying all creeds and *topoi*:

> The bone tasted of nothing and
> smelled of nothing,
> A scalded toothless harp,
> uncrushed, unstrung.
> The joined arcs made the shape of
> birth and craving
> And the welded-open shape kept
> mouthing O.

Similarly, the Shiva/Parvati poem celebrates the embrace "beyond reason" of the two Hindu deities:

Each is also the other, in touching
Touched, also the threads

Of rain and also the wheel
Of the sky also the foliage
So delicate only the torn-off

Wings of the green woodbeetle
Could represent it in a picture:
The rosecolored mother-father

Flushed, full, penetrated and
Also penetrated, entering
And entering, endowing

And also devouring, necklace
Of skulls and also ecstasy
Of hiding in raindrops, in

The storm, their eight sleek
Limbs and numberless
Faces all spokes from one trunk.

The swift, lightly accented lines—speeded by a string of participles—gather a sibilance that sets the whole page to whispering. One needs but an unstopped ear in order to grasp with what force of compulsion the poet feels his words.

At the pivot-point of this book, then, is a systole/diastole, a deeply registered dynamic of creation and destruction. It shines through as clearly in Pinsky's more earthbound memory poems as it does in this last ineffable passage. In a longer review I would go on to suggest some of the ways that Pinsky grounds his perceptions in lyrics of more contemporary mien. But perhaps these can be left as an enticement for the reader interested in making contact with this most intransigent and enlightened of poets. □

BOOK REVIEW

Tragedy in Red

Maurice Isserman

The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe by Timothy Garton Ash. Random House, 1989, 335 pp.

The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague by Timothy Garton Ash. Random House, 1990, 156 pp.

Timothy Garton Ash has written the *Ten Days that Shook the World* of the Eastern European revolutions. Like John Reed, whose account of the Russian Revolution did more than any other single work to fire the imagination of Bolshevik sympathizers in the West, Garton Ash's writings over the past decade have shaped our perceptions of the anti-Bolshevik leaders who determined the fate of Eastern European communism. Reed's classic portraits of Lenin, the precise logician, and Trotsky, the mercurial tribune, have found their worthy (if ironic) literary successors in Garton Ash's portraits of Walesa, the ambitious craftsman, and Havel, the rumpled playwright.

I'm not sure that Garton Ash would welcome the comparison (the jacket blurb on *The Uses of Adversity* compares him instead to George Orwell). Reed went on to become one of the founders of the American Communist Party and Garton Ash, to say the least, doesn't care for Communists. He declares in the preface to *The Magic Lantern,* a blow-by-blow account of the upheavals in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, that his sympathies in the Eastern bloc lie "with the former prisoners of conscience rather than the former gaolers of conscience." So it's all the more interesting, and a credit to his integrity as a political analyst, that his two books give due consideration to the ambiguities of the history of communism.

A little less than three-quarters of a century after the founding of the world's first Communist state, international communism is in a state of collapse: dismantled in Eastern Europe, discredited in the Soviet Union and China, disappearing in the West. Few tears have been shed anywhere over the downfall of tyrants like East Germany's Honecker and Romania's Ceaucescu. Communism, flawed in its origins and stained with the crimes of Stalin and his lesser imitators, will pass from existence unmourned by the overwhelming majority of those unfortunate enough to have lived under its rule.

But if the movement does not deserve to be mourned, it does deserve to be understood. For communism's unhappy story is one of the great tragedies of our time, indeed of human history. Communism embodied some of the best as well as the worst impulses of an era. Out of power, Communists lent an eloquent voice and unmatched organizational skills to defend the interests of the world's powerless and oppressed; in power, they formed privileged, self-perpetuating, and sometimes murderous cliques. Communism provided millions of people in countries around the world with a vision of international solidarity. This vision rendered traditional national rivalries and ethnic hatreds obsolete, but served at the same time as ideological cover for the state interests of bullying superpowers. Throughout the movement's history such impulses warred with one another. Several times the reformers

---

Maurice Isserman teaches American history at Hamilton College. His most recent book, co-authored with Dorothy Healey, is Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party *(Oxford University Press, 1990).*

within the movement seemed poised to gain the upper hand. But each time they failed; and it was their cumulative failure that, in the end, doomed the movement toward reform. This, I should point out, is *my* point of view, not Garton Ash's. He has as little regard for reform-minded Communists as for any other variety. But his observations on the fall of Eastern European communism are sufficiently nuanced to allow for a more balanced reading of the history of the movement.

Such subtlety has been in markedly short supply in some other quarters. Consider, for example, Michael Novak, in *Commentary*'s recent symposium on "The American 80's." Novak credited Ronald Reagan with launching the "Velvet Revolution" in Central Europe: "The Reagan Revolution, like its predecessor [the American war for independence] was a shot heard 'round the world. . . ." "Who was Right, Who was Wrong, & Why" *Encounter* magazine asked in its "inquest" on "the death of communism." "Why, we were [right]," Norman Podhoretz replied, defining "we" as "the unreconstructed hard-line anti-Communist cold warriors." Among the insights he claims for his camp is the discovery that communism was "no less evil than Nazism."

One thing Garton Ash's work makes apparent is that the revolutions in Central Europe had little to do with Ronald Reagan's alleged inspirational example. The roots of the revolutions antedated Reagan's presidency and, especially in the crucial and risky early days, the revolutionaries were not Reagan's or Novak's or Podhoretz's kind of folks. Up until the mid-1970s, Garton Ash writes in *The Uses of Adversity,* "much of the vocabulary of the opposition in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia was unmistakably of the left."

Of course, by the time the revolutions came in 1989, political sentiment inside the opposition movements had shifted dramatically away from the Left. A striking worker in the Gdansk shipyard grumbled to Garton Ash, "Forty years of socialism and there's still no toilet paper!" Given the association of "socialism" with the deficiencies of Soviet-style command economies, and the brutalities of Communist rule, it is not surprising that—at least in the short run—the appeal of democratic left alternatives should have declined along with previous regimes. Once communism fell, voters in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were also shrewd enough to realize that a center-right government would have a much better chance of negotiating economic aid and investment from the capitalist West that would one of a more social-democratic cast. In East Germany the influence of the non-Communist Left also was overshadowed by the miracle cure of reunification with West Germany. But it was in East Germany, as Garton Ash notes in *The Magic Lantern,* that the opposition movement that swept the Communist regime from power in 1989 had the most pronounced left character: "Ideologically, the opposition in the GDR was a curious mixture of Marxist revisionism, social democracy, Green and Peace movement concerns, and left-wing Protestantism. . . ." Whatever may follow the fall of the old regimes, the revolutions in 1989 were *not* a triumph of the Right over the Left. They represented instead the temporary alliance of politically disparate movements of the Left, Center, and Right against a common oppressor.

The Communist movement was created by desperate men and women in times more desperate than we can imagine.

Within the ranks of the movements that brought an end to Eastern European communism, there were to be found thousands of Communists and ex-Communists. One of the few whose participation was acknowledged by Western observers was Alexander Dubcek, leader of the Czech Communist Party during the "Prague Spring" of 1968, who was overthrown and forced into obscure retirement after the Warsaw Pact invasion. In *The Magic Lantern,* Garton Ash described the scene when Dubcek came to address the crowds in Prague's Wenceslas Square in November 1989, looking "as if he has stepped straight out of a black-and-white photograph from 1968":

> But when he steps out on to the balcony in the frosty evening air, illuminated by television spotlights, the crowds give such a roar as I have never heard. DUBCEK! DUBCEK! echoes off the tall houses up and down the long, narrow square. . . . He still believes in socialism—that is, reformed communism—with a human face. The true leader of this movement, in Prague at least, is Havel not Dubcek. But for the moment none of this matters. For the moment all that matters is that the legendary hero is really standing here. . . .

In the world as imagined by Norman Podhoretz such a scene is an anomaly. Those being liberated from "communism-nazism," were cheering the former leader of the "Communists-Nazis." But the crowds in Prague proved themselves capable of making finer distinctions than those favored by American neoconservatives. They understood that even if some Communists and brands of communism were as evil as nazism, others were not. And they honored Dubcek's attempt to create a socialism with a human face, even if they no longer shared much faith in its possibilities. Similarly, one of the key events in the Hungarian revolution of 1989 was a memorial service in Budapest's Heroes Square honoring Imre Nagy, the Hungarian Communist leader shot by the Russians after the failed Hungarian revolt of 1956. The setting for Nagy's service was designed by a Hungarian architect named Laszlo Rajk, whose father was another Hungarian Communist leader executed in the purge trials of the early 1950s. Two hundred thousand people turned out to honor Nagy's memory.

If Communists were executioners, they were also often the victims, and sometimes the critics of the system constructed in the name of their ideals. In *The Uses of Adversity,* Garton Ash discusses the famous lines from Bertolt Brecht's play *The Measures Taken:* "If, at last, you could change the world, what/Would you think yourself too good for?/Who are you?/Sink into filth/Embrace the butcher, but/Change the world: it needs it!" These lines, he suggests, argue

> precisely those ethical conclusions from Marxism (from which it is possible to draw other conclusions) and Leninism (from which it is

almost impossible to draw other conclusions) that would be used to justify all the atrocities of Stalinism in Brecht's lifetime.

How then can one account for Brecht's indignant mockery of the official justifications for the suppression of the workers' uprising in East Berlin in 1953: "Would it not then/be simpler, for the government/to dissolve the People and/elect another?" Brecht's artistic integrity, Garton Ash suggests, occasionally got the better of his political commitments: "The poet Brecht is superbly subversive of every orthodoxy —including his own." But another possibility is that the *Communist* Brecht might also have proved subversive of Stalinist orthodoxy. Brecht was an apologist for the regime in East Germany, out of conviction and necessity, but like many Communists he was an apologist with a bad conscience. And a bad conscience, given enough time, can be a powerful force for change.

In his poem "To Posterity," written during his years of exile from Nazi Germany, Brecht mused that "we who wished to lay the foundations of kindness/Could not ourselves be kind." Do not, he asks of future readers in the poem's concluding lines, "judge us too harshly." However harshly we now judge the Communists, we should recognize that their movement was created by desperate men and women in times more desperate than we can easily imagine.

Communism emerged out of the horrors of the mass slaughter of World War I, the related collapse of the prewar socialist movement, and the frantic efforts of Lenin's small band of followers to consolidate the power they had seized in the chaotic conditions of revolutionary Russia. Reflecting the repressive conditions under which they were forced to operate, and Lenin's own temperament, the prerevolutionary Bolsheviks were single-minded and intolerant. But they were not planning on instituting "Stalinism." Lenin thought he was bringing freedom to the long-suffering victims of Czarist autocracy by the only possible means: a revolution led by a highly trained and disciplined corps of revolutionaries. Once the revolution was secured, Lenin predicted in *State and Revolution* in 1917, "any cook" could aspire to run the state.

That was not to be. The Bolsheviks made a minority revolution (only 200,000 Party members were in Russia at the time), which sealed the fate of czarism but also gave communism a fatal shove toward totalitarianism. Lenin was tempted to make the revolution in this most backward of Europe's capitalist powers because he expected that socialist revolutions would soon follow in the more developed West. Finding themselves alone and besieged by internal and external opponents, the Bolsheviks introduced a series of "temporary" measures to meet the emergency: suppression of competing parties on the Left, creation of a secret police apparatus, the trial and execution of political critics. The expedients of the revolution and the civil war hardened into the hallmarks of Communist rule, and grew a thousand times more terrible under the nightmare rule of Lenin's successor Stalin.

Though they have to be judged by their record and not their intentions, the Bolsheviks did not foresee the circumstances that were to lead them in time to become the architects of a new totalitarian order. Nor were the grimmer aspects of the Soviet experiment the source of attraction for millions of people around the world who joined and often risked their lives for the Communist movement in the following decades. The old socialist aspirations of fraternity and equality flowed into the movement that in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s seemed the best and often the only available vehicle for their realization.

"Everything in the outside world seemed to be moving toward some final decision," the literary critic Alfred Kazin recalled in his memoir *Growing Up in the Thirties*. Kazin, who came of age in a socialist immigrant household in New York City, did not in the end become a Communist, but remembered well the appeal of the movement to himself and his contemporaries:

> There seemed to be no division between my effort at personal liberation and the apparent effort of humanity to deliver itself. Reading Silone and Malraux, discovering the Beethoven string quartets and having love affairs were part of the great pattern in Spain, in Nazi concentration camps, in Fontamara and in the Valley of the Ebro, in the Salinas Valley of California that Steinbeck was describing with love for the oppressed, in the boilers of Chinese locomotives where Chiang Kai-shek was burning the brave and sacrificial militants of the Chinese Communists. Wherever I went now, I felt the moral contagion of a single idea.

Identifying with men and women around the world who were fighting and dying for the same cause, embracing an ideal of revolutionary self-sacrifice, Communists outside the Soviet Union often remained willfully blind to the true nature of Stalin's regime. British historian E. P. Thompson, writing in 1957 in a journal called *New Reasoner* (better known in a later incarnation as *New Left Review*), described the process through which some of communism's greatest virtues were transformed into its most serious defects:

> In storm and defeat, in concentration camp and partisan detachment, there grew up that intensity of self-abnegation, that sense of acting as the instrument of historical necessity, above all, that intense loyalty to the Party.... Stalinism ... turned these virtues into instruments of destruction. The centre of moral authority was removed from the community or the conscience of the individual and entrusted to the Party.

Thompson, who had recently resigned from the British Communist Party, nevertheless believed that "Stalinism has never been the same thing as the world Communist movement." Among Communists in the West, Thompson argued, there had been an ongoing battle between authoritarian orthodoxy on the one hand and "practical experience, the humanist traditions of the socialist movement, [and] the creative ideas of Marx and Engels" on the other. And even within the Eastern bloc countries, "the people's traditions, their experience in life" was at work to undermine the "false consciousness" of the Stalinist regimes.

The struggle Thompson described waxed and waned within the Communist movements in various countries, in the West and in Eastern Europe,

over the next thirty years. In some parties, debates over questions of tactics and leadership grew into a searching critique of the movement's history and fundamental assumptions. The reformers came to reject the Soviet model of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "democratic centralist" principles of party organization. In the West, reformers triumphed in the Italian, the British, the Australian, and the Japanese Communist parties. (In the United States Gus Hall's gerontocracy stifled similar impulses.) But where it counted most, within the Communist movements in power in Eastern Europe and Asia, the reformers kept losing until it was too late.

The most decisive loss came in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In Czechoslovakia (unlike Poland, where as Stalin once commented, communism made about as much sense as a saddle on a cow) the Communists had developed a genuine mass base of support in the industrial working class in the interwar years, and had played an honorable role in the wartime anti-Nazi resistance. There was a real possibility that Dubcek's experimental brand of socialism with a human face could have evolved into a fully pluralist democratic socialism. Had the Czechoslovak Communists gone their own way, the influence of their example would surely have spilled across the border into neighboring countries. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev understood that possibility perfectly, which is why the armies of the Warsaw Pact stormed into Czechoslovakia in August 1968 to cut short Dubcek's experiment.

In a 1968 review of a book by Vaclav Havel, Garton Ash notes Havel's argument that pressure from below had produced the Prague Spring. But, Garton Ash asks, "Is there anyone inside the [Czechoslovakian Communist] Party now who will respond to this pressure as Party intellectuals and reformers did then? Then there were still genuine, convinced communists and socialists inside the Party. Now there seem to be only cynics and careerists. . . ." That gets at the heart of the matter. The Communist parties of Eastern Europe, purged and chastened and hollowed-out, first under Stalin and then under Brezhnev, had too few "genuine, convinced communists and socialists" left by the 1980s. "Those who lead the country into the abyss," Brecht wrote in another of his poems from exile, "call ruling too difficult for ordinary men." Communism's downfall is truly a tale of Brechtian irony, in which ruthless men devoted only to maintaining their own power undermined first the ideals and finally the very existence of the regimes they led. Had Dubcek and similar reformers from within the movement enjoyed their own "ten days to shake the world," we might not now be reading inquests on the death of communism. □

Book Review

Some Enchanted War

Frank Browning

Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two by Allan Berube. The Free Press, 1990, 377 pages.

Reading through Allan Berube's consummate history of gay life during World War II brought back one of my earliest memories of sexual difference. It was in a big-screen movie house in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1956, and as best I can recall, it was the first movie I'd ever seen, *South Pacific*.

So much about that movie was enticing and confusing to boys of the fifties who were realizing they weren't quite right. There were the exotic USO men dolled up in grass skirts and bras with coconut breasts: my first unwitting peek into the world of drag. And there were the lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein's postwar anthem of racial acceptance: "You've got to be taught before it's too late/ To hate all the people your relatives hate." But mostly I recall the first man I ever had a crush on: lithe, lean John Kerr, who played the young lieutenant agonizingly separated from the beautiful Balinese girl by his own fear of racial difference. To a child who had no words to articulate the stirring of his own secret drives, there was a terrible poignancy to the film's famous underwater ballet between Kerr and the girl, a liquid dance that could take place only where no one else might see or hear it.

My inexplicable appetite for Kerr, Kerr's tortured appetite for an impossible love, the schmaltzy ballad of the French planter-colonel for the small-town Pennsylvanian, Nellie Forbush ("Some Enchanted Evening"): all these mixed-up bits from navy life of World War II were virtual emotional Tinkertoys for a child of the fifties. Like all the postwar musicals, *South Pacific* portrayed an American tableau of goodness and normalcy, where regular people seemed well on the road to the promised life. But for kids like myself who were uncertain about exactly what road we were bound for, these images from the last "good war" also opened in us an internal zone where we could contemplate our own growing deviation from the acceptable. Alan Berube's remarkable if often dry account documents these images and emotions, showing how wartime itself allowed an entire generation of Americans to construct the modern world's first gay subculture.

Frank Browning is a correspondent for National Public Radio currently on leave to write a book on gay culture in America.

War, its best apologists argue, regenerates the social life of the victors, upsets complacency, inspires passion and determination, and thereby releases new stores of inventiveness and ingenuity. At the level of simple logistics, war snatches up small-town boys (and, to a lesser degree, girls) and sends them to new lands where the conventions of home and hearth do not hold. Abroad, they must examine deeply who and what they really care about. World War II dispatched millions of Americans into the largest all-male theater ever known, where the bonding of buddies could and did turn daily into the love of comrades. This bred not only, or even usually, erotic love, but instead a bonding of souls whose union could often be stronger than anything in civilian marriage.

Yet often enough, inside the foxholes and beneath the sirens of rockets and mortars, there did appear the physical love of men for men and women for women. "You'd get a buddy," sailor Maxwell Gordon told Berube,

> and you'd look out for each other and pretty soon you started exchanging clothes. And you ate together, usually bunked close together, went down to the head and showered together, and shared everything together. Went to the dentist together, for God's sake! A lot of friendships became intense and men were getting closer and closer. People ended up lovers. The ship was crawling with them. It was an accepted thing.

The men, Gordon recalled, didn't consider themselves gay: they simply fell in love with each other.

Although at times gays and lesbians were excluded, discharged, or thrown in the brig, often the war opened up social space, sometimes even a remarkable heterosexual tolerance, for homosexual relationships. Former naval officer Robert Gervais tells the story of a tropical night in the South Pacific while he was on watch and a tough lieutenant commander came by to chat:

> I had him pegged as a strict disciplinarian. And so both of us looked down in number two turret there and two guys were having sex. You could just see it in the moonlight. So I looked down there, and he looked, and he looked at me and said, "Gervais, would you go down there and tell those men to move underneath the turret out of sight of the bridge?" Not go get their names or stop what's going on or bring them up to the bridge! So I went down there and I just stamped my feet as I went by and of course they shoved off. Nothing said, you know. I thought, "You old son-of-a-bitch! You're not as bad as they think you are."

THE NATIONAL INTEREST WINTER ISSUE

AMERICA AND ISRAEL

HOW BAD IS IT?
WILL IT GET WORSE?

Steven Spiegel, Leon Wieseltier, Robert Tucker
Neal Kozody, Graham Fuller, Douglas Feith

-plus-

IRAQ: AN AMERICAN SCREW-UP
Paul Gigot

-and much more.

To subscribe or for a newsstand near you, write or call:
The National Interest
1112-16th Street NW, Suite 540, Washington, D.C. 20036
202-467-4884.

204TK

Wars, like prisons, have always brought out the intimacy of comrades, teaching individuals that passion is no respecter of gender. But more was going on in the world's greatest war. It came at a time when Americans were finally relinquishing the dream of bucolic community life, when the promise of the modern city defined the future. It also came at a time when "scientific" psychotherapy had finally moved beyond the locked corridors of the insanity wards and was taking its place as a tool of human management. By the outset of the war, military psychiatrists were arguing forcefully that homosexuals were not criminals but were instead a "type" of human being who was incapable of controlling his or her condition. It followed that such people should as a group either be excluded or "managed." However retrograde that attitude may seem today, it was a critical turning point in America's reconceptualization of homosexuals.

The sodomy laws did not disappear—even today they remain on the books in twenty-four states—but the new mental health movement's campaign to transfer gays from the turf of the penologists and snatch them up for their own professional interests opened the first broad discourse over what homosexuality is. Whether or not the new mental health doctors could "cure" homosexuality mattered less than that they saw it as a *condition,* a state of being that described vast numbers of human beings. That shift in perception, as it spread among bureaucratic generals overseeing millions of sailors and GIs, set the ground for understanding homosexuality as mass—and therefore normal—behavior in America.

At the same time this war, more than any before it, reshuffled millions

of Americans, forcing them out of the safety of their old lives and regular cultural habitats, pressing men into all-male settings, women into all-female settings, where gender roles were continually confused. Men became cooks and seamsters; women became mechanics and bus drivers. For the first time in modern history large numbers of people who harbored homosexual impulses were able to find each other in a setting where they would not be treated as simple criminals. Though it would be another quarter-century before the next generation of gays would reject the concept of homosexuality as a disease and launch its own demand for respect as a minority culture, these wartime transformations set the stage for an open gay movement.

The men didn't consider themselves gay; they simply fell in love with each other.

Beyond private, personal passion, probably nothing contributed so much to the growth of a distinct gay identity as the military's open endorsement of drag. Early in 1942, army headquarters endorsed military shows as morale builders and started handing out scripts, song lyrics, set designs—even dress patterns showing GIs how to stitch up ballet tutus for burly guys. These handbooks were, in effect, the first mass-produced instructional guides for all-male drag shows; as the Army put it, "a homemade entertainment cake that GI Joes can bake for themselves."

Female impersonation certainly did not originate with American GIs of the 1940s; high-class drag shows were a mainstay of nineteenth-century theater, and women's roles had been given to young boys since the medieval mystery plays. But these shows were different—first because the impersonators were regular grunts in the next bunk, and second, because they made no effort to hide the male bodies beneath the coconut breasts and pastel tutus. In that way, they were the direct forebears of the gender-fuck shows by groups in the 1970s like the Rediculous Theatre Company and the Cockettes, surreal send-ups that would portray Camille with a beard or Tricia Nixon with a hairy chest.

Once tens of thousands of Americans, thanks to the troop carriers and foxhole romances and drag shows, realized how many others were like themselves, they found it nearly impossible to revert to the pinched lives they had left behind in the civilian world. When they came home at the end of the war, they landed not as individuals but in networks, let loose upon their former ports of embarkation, New York and San Francisco chief among them. Those who had been given so-called Blue Discharges, marking them as homosexuals and usually excluding them from veterans' benefits, developed their own special solidarity. A dozen gay men who had been rounded up following a purge in French New Caledonia later settled in Los Angeles and dubbed themselves the Daughters of the French Revolution—all puns intended. Another group of six who had been given Blue Discharges stole their name, the Blue Angels, from the title of Marlene Dietrich's high-camp film of 1930. In the coastal cities, these men, as well as a good many lesbians, sought to reclaim in civilian life the camaraderie and sense of collective identity that the military had unintentionally given them as homosexuals.

When Maxwell Gordon was discharged from the navy in 1946, he found that "everything stopped too quick." His search to continue the life he had found in the navy took him to New York and the clandestine gay life of a YMCA hotel. Gordon and other vets were in a quandary over where they belonged in American life:

> [The vets] would go home, [after having] had an experience or a friendship in the service with a man. They'd say, "Well the war's over and I'll put that behind me. Now I'm going home and I'm going to marry and we're going to settle down." They'd go home and they could not fit in. Everything was too odd. They had responsibilities and there was a lot of peer pressure: get married, have kids, start a home. They just weren't ready. Then they'd come back to New York.... A lot of them knew they would never fit in again. So they stayed in New York.

Failure to "fit" in the world of their parents presented these gays with a new kind of problem. In the small towns and cities, especially within black and some ethnic communities, there had been silent codes that permitted homosexuals to maintain discreet liaisons—so long as their "perversion" was never displayed, so long as it never appeared to be more than an individual aberration, so long as they fulfilled their family responsibilities. But for the ordinary working vets who could neither go back to that life nor find shelter in bohemian enclaves, there was no choice but to build new communities of their own.

Half a century later, the heterosexual majority still fails to understand the terrible dilemma these gay vets and their descendants have faced. In the best liberal tradition, straights merely shrug their shoulders and declare that, of course, anything two individuals wish to do in the privacy of the bedroom is their private affair, and assume the conversation is over. In a recent essay in *Esquire,* Pete Hamill, a writer of impeccable liberal credentials, complains that while he has no use for homophobic gay-bashing, he has grown "tired of listening to people who identify themselves exclusively by what they do with their cocks." For Hamill and his ilk, being gay seems little more than a matter of who enters which orifice with which projectile. Missing from his matter-of-fact exasperation is any awareness that love, affection, friendship, and sexual performance are deeply intertwined and that they are shaped by social conventions. Our ideas of "maleness" and "femaleness" are formed by those conventions; they cannot be neatly detached from how we behave in the bedroom, at the table, on the job, and at the movies. These questions of elemental identity are the most mine-filled zones of our lives, gay or straight, and when some of us go about touching off those mines, redefining what is "male" and what is "female," others get upset precisely because the reliability of the arrangement is what ensures a sense of cultural order.

The tens of thousands of gay American men and women who left the war zones in 1945 and '46—knowing that they would live the remainder of their lives never having appropriate social companions—were the first such group

of its size to face living outside the established cultural order, and the first to have to invent a new culture of its own. Quietly they settled in the marginal and bohemian zones of New York and Los Angeles and San Francisco, forming bridge clubs, throwing outrageous drag parties, opening bars and restaurants, staking out their own physical and social turf—much as Irish and Jewish and Chinese immigrants had done before them.

For a while, it seemed gays might win real status as a new American minority. Postwar America was a freer world, flush with the confidence of victory. The paranoia of the cold war had not yet arrived. Hard-line moralists who sought to punish homosexuals and other "deviants" by denying them veterans' benefits were denounced in Congress. The nation felt a deep appreciation for all GIs who had served in the conquest of fascism. That generosity emboldened gays to begin pressing their own claims, and fighting for their own rights *as a community.* A WAC officer from Ohio wrote in 1945 to the newspaper *Yank* of having

> voluntarily drunk from the Lesbian cup and [having] tasted much of the bitterness contained therein as far as the attitude of society is concerned. I believe there is much that can and should be done in the near future to aid in the solution of this problem, thus enabling these people to take their rightful places as fellow human beings, your sister and brother in the brotherhood of mankind.

The vision was glowingly optimistic, and it won sympathy from establishment liberal quarters, even from columnists in the *Saturday Review of Literature* and *Newsweek* who spoke of the new, emerging homosexual "minority." Yet the optimism of the young gay vets proved naive, as the anti-Communist witch hunts of the cold war quickly expanded to include lists of "known perverts." Drag shows were closed, newly opened gay bars raided. Early homosexual rights organizations like the Mattachine Society developed underground cells to defend themselves from vice-squad raids.

But despite the right-wing drive to root out America's "homosexual menace," the subterranean communities continued to grow, and it may even be that their underground status helped to solidify their special character and strength. Men and women who had learned to survive in combat zones were toughened in their resolve to live the lives that fate had issued them. Like homosexuals before the war, they were forced into a world of furtive signals and secret contacts; unlike prewar homosexuals, however, their furtive behavior was communal and collective, not individual. It was in this secret crucible that gays and lesbians taught themselves the codes and rituals of self-identity and self-preservation, codes and rituals that even today remain largely invisible to heterosexuals up the block and across the street.

Political convention would have it that the "culture" of gay community life emerged only with the liberation movement following 1969's Stonewall Rebellion. But perverse as it may seem, the resilience of what is still a nascent gay culture may owe just as much to the double punch, captured in Berube's book, of wartime adventure and the obdurate resistance that enabled gays to survive McCarthyism. □

Book Review

Vilna on my Mind

Jonathan Boyarin

Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France Since 1968 by Judith Friedlander. Yale University Press, 1990, 249 pp.

The intellectual accomplishments of French Jews since World War II have been so remarkable that it's hard to explain why we have neglected them. French Jews have adroitly confronted the relation between the Enlightenment and the Jewish tradition, the tension between various Jewish ethnic heritages and the call for a unified Jewish identity, and the relationship between Jewish communal autonomy and the contemporary nation-state. But our poor training in foreign languages and philosophy and the insularity of Jewish studies in America blind us to their accomplishments.

Hints of what's going on in France have come through now and then. We're aware that names like Levinas, Derrida, and Jabès are central to postwar French letters, and that these figures incorporate, to varying degrees, Jewish motifs and concerns into their work. But we still tend to think of them as extraordinary figures, bridging worlds that otherwise remain completely distinct. In fact, they are only a few of those involved in a multiform project to find new ways of being Jewish and French (or as Levinas might say, Jewish and "Greek") at the same time.

Vilna on the Seine documents this multiform project by examining several individual writers and scholars—some pre-war immigrants and others French-born Jews—who came to maturity in the turbulence of 1968. But beyond that, Judith Friedlander's book traces the origins of recent inquiries

Jonathan Boyarin, an anthropologist, is the author of the forthcoming Polish Jews in Paris: The Ethnography of Memory *(Indiana University Press, 1991).*

into French-Jewish cultural identity to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century encounter between French Enlightenment and "rationalist" Lithuanian Orthodox learning. Friedlander sees *Lite*—the Jewish cultural region that actually extended well beyond the boundaries of twentieth-century Lithuania, and whose "capital" was Vilna, "the Jerusalem of Lithuania"—as a sort of intellectual *lieu de memoire:* the imagined source of contemporary intellectual movements. This may seem puzzling, since two of the figures I've just mentioned—Jabès and Derrida—are themselves immigrants from North Africa. Yet the connections Friedlander draws are strong, rich, and startlingly direct.

Friedlander sees three major strands of Jewish collective identity in France that have both parallels and roots in *Lite*. The first is nonterritorialist cultural nationalism, modeled on the program of the Jewish Labor Bund (founded in Vilna in 1897 and still barely existing today), and on the ideas of the historian Simon Dubnow: both pushed national governments to support separate ethnic schools and cultural institutions. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the *Cercle Gaston Crémieux* championed the cause of minority nationality rights. Like the Bund, the *Cercle* has a militantly secular vision of Jewish identity. Like the Bund in the Russian Empire, the *Cercle*'s strategy has been to rally all of the cultural minorities in France—the Bretons, Occitans, and Armenians, and others—around the goal of preserving and promoting distinctive minority identities. The *Cercle* has been allied with Western European Socialist and Labor party ideology. But, unlike the Bund, it has met with governmental acceptance: portions of its program of state support for minority cultures have been adopted by the socialist administration under Culture Minister Jack Lang, who in 1988 created the National Council of Regional Languages and Cultures. That support has in turn facilitated other efforts more directly aimed at preserving and spreading competence in Yiddish language and culture.

The second major strand Friedlander discusses is a new philosophical discourse that puts rabbinic writings side by side with writings of the French Enlightenment. Emmanuel Levinas, born in the Lithuanian city of Kovno, raised in a "modern" family, but provided with a solid Hebrew education, is the keystone here. (He is, along with the Bund, the presiding genius of both Friedlander's book and the cultural space it sets out to map.) Levinas is at once an ethical philosopher in the Western tradition and an interpreter of the Talmud to the annual Colloquium of Francophone Jewish Intellectuals. (A collection of his "talmudic readings," soon to be published by Indiana University Press, rewards careful study.)

That a distinct Jewish population "belongs" in France is still not universally assumed, and the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen continues to grow more popular and more "respectable."

The last, and perhaps most surprising heritage of *Lite* in France is a movement of unapologetic and uncompromising separatist Orthodox Judaism. Here again, by articulating rabbinic thought in the idiom of twentieth-century philosophy, Levinas has been a crucial point of contact, a way station for younger French Jews moving from Marxism to contemporary secular philosophy and through the doors of the yeshiva and the synagogue. The institutional focus of this revival of "Lithuanian" Mitnagdic (as opposed to Chasidic) learning and observance, however, is *La Yechiva des Etudiants* in Strasbourg. Here the genealogy becomes more complicated: the head of the yeshiva in Strasbourg, Rabbi Eliahou Abitbol, was educated in the Lithuanian tradition but comes from a working-class Moroccan family. *Lite* is not, in short, the sole heritage of those descended from Lithuanian Jews.

This short list of *Lite* concerns—secular cultural nationalism, philosophy with a soupçon of Talmud, scholarly Orthodoxy—seems to suffer from one glaring omission: where are the Zionists? Friedlander implies that, while questions of the centrality of Israel and the responsibilities of French Jews vis-à-vis Israeli policies are of great concern, "Zionism" per se is not high on the agenda of younger French Jewish intellectuals. The exception that proves the rule here is the Algerian-born neo-Orthodox scholar, organizer, and polemicist Shmuel Trigano. But while Trigano believed that "Jews need to live in a state infused with the ideals of Judaism," he eventually left Israel: "in order," he maintains, "not to grow cynical and lose faith in Zionism." Apparently, the letter must be killed that the spirit may live on: for Trigano the dream of humane Zionism can only be sustained outside the Jewish state.

Like the reinvention of "Lithuanian" forms of Jewish expression, Judith Friedlander's ethnography has its own convoluted genesis. She launched her career with an ethnography of a group of Mexican Indians. But memories of a childhood meeting with a young French Jewish woman, linked with a new interest in her own Litvak background, led to an intermediate plan to study Lithuanian female Jewish émigré in Mexico City, Paris, and New York, and eventually to *Vilna on the Seine.*

Revealing the link between a Long Island Jewish childhood and a book published by Yale University Press is an important act of demystification, helping to place the author in her own cultural and historical milieux. But on a much grander scale, *Vilna on the Seine*'s chief accomplishment is its introduction to the overlapping social and intellectual histories of French Jewish discourse. Friedlander stands ethnography on its head by studying those whose lives are constructed consciously and articulately around an intellectual system. She neither tries to explain culture by the exigencies of the "material" situation, nor does she depict individuals as being created by their culture. And she shows that even the cultural world of these self-reflexive intellectuals is grounded in the particulars of history and daily life.

Vilna on the Seine may be less satisfying to those more interested in the debates themselves than in the cultural terrain surrounding them. Friedlander holds back from engaging the intellectuals on their own terms. Her argument for the ties between Litvak and French Jewish intellectualism is grounded in the term "rationality," but nowhere does she critically examine its implications or the range of its uses. Her argument

suggests the need for more discussion of the very notion of "Litvak rationalism." Failing that, the best we can do is make a stereotyped binary opposition of *Lite* rationalism to "Chasidic mysticism." In her desire to prove the continuity of the tradition from the banks of the Vilejka to the banks of the Seine, she occasionally fails to capture the fine sense of rifts and transformations in that tradition. One might well ask why it is precisely that Rabbi Abitbol, a Moroccan Jew, has become head of the leading "Litvak" yeshiva in France. What's Moroccan about Abitbol's "Lithuanian" yeshiva? If Abitbol's approach is so different from that of Levinas, wouldn't it be equally valid (or invalid) to speak of "Casablanca on the Seine?" But Friedlander's strategy, which enables us to see the continuities with Eastern Europe, precludes consideration of the analogous problems and proposals that spring from the North African Jewish experience.

Friedlander reports, with an undertone of mild wonder, that "in academic circles we find people of learning comparing French Enlightenment thought to the teachings of rabbis from eighteenth and nineteenth-century Lithuania." In a way this is a genuinely startling, moving, and exciting comparison, since Eastern European Orthodoxy and French-style Enlightenment are still commonly thought of as worlds apart. But what does this phenomenon say about the construction of a distinctive Jewish-French identity? Friedlander, like the Levinas-influenced "academic circles" she discusses, seems to believe that French and Litvak "rationalism" can be made to speak a common language. But might we not also detect in the phenomenon she describes an unspoken project of making Frenchness and Jewishness compatible, of relaxing the intolerable tension between them, much as the theme of "democracy" has been used to harmonize Jewish American identity? Trying to explain away the tension can blinker one to some of the inadequacies of Enlightenment thought, the very inadequacies that may be abetting the current revival of French fascism.

Jewish Renewal Life Center

for adults seeking to explore Jewish possibilities

- ✡ Live in a progressive community
- ✡ Learn with leaders of the Jewish Renewal movement
- ✡ Engage in a program of Spiritual Activism

Year-long residential program
starting October 1991

For more information contact: Rabbi Julie Greenberg
6445 Greene Street, B202
Philadelphia, PA 19119
(215) 843-4345

a project of P'nai Or Religious Fellowship

The limits of the French-Jewish challenge to the monoculture of French Republicanism are evident in the work of Alain Finkielkraut, one of Levinas's students who explicitly advocates Jewish integration into the French state. Finkielkraut first came to Jewish attention in 1980 with a book called *Le Juif imaginaire* (The Imaginary Jew), in which he chastised his own generation for assuming the mantle of their parents' Jewishness without any actual knowledge of Jewish culture and without having suffered and struggled as Jews. Later he developed a sustained theoretical critique of the celebration of "difference," whether of the Jewish or Third World variety. He argued for Levinas's individualist ethics of responsibility toward "the Other," along with, in Friedlander's words, "a return to the principles of the French Enlightenment and a re-evaluation of the concept of a universal culture." Finkielkraut, in fact, "implies that ethnic minorities only come into conflict with the politics of [the] state when they do not respect the freedom of individual members of the group."

Friedlander hardly seems to notice that, in her own summary, Finkielkraut's arguments really sound like an extended apology for the liberal French state. The crucial element that seems to be missing, both in Finkielkraut's argument and in Friedlander's response, is the notion of the creative potential of attachment to human groupings other than those by which the state defines itself. The *Cercle Gaston Crémieux* is striving to preserve, with its assertion of "the right to difference," exactly such creative potential. Their claim that difference per se should be promoted conflicts with Finkielkraut's claim that what is "true" in each tradition partakes of a common rational humanity. Yet Friedlander does not quite give us the material to judge the merits of these conflicting claims.

On the other end of the spectrum from Finkielkraut, Benny Lévy, a key figure in the post-1968 French Left and for years the secretary and companion of Sartre, has abandoned politics for Rabbi Abitbol's yeshiva. We are left with the impression that, while an individual may move from passionate political involvement to a radical assertion of religious Jewish continuity, an amalgamation of the two is the one possibility still left untried in contemporary France.

What comes through strongly in Friedlander's book, beyond the thesis of a specific origin in *Lite* for much of what characterizes French Jewry

today, beyond the description of the many streams of Jewish identification in France, is that Jews are once again a test case for the relation between the state and particular collectivities within it. Just how much cultural diversity the French Republic will tolerate has become—for Arabs especially—a burning issue. It's ominous to note the similarity of present-day examinations of minority culture to the debates on the Jewish question in which the young Marx participated, or to the clashes between Lenin and the Bund over the rights of minority cultures: moments that turned out disastrously for the Jews, for the Left, and for democratic culture in general.

It is not at all clear whether the French-Jewish intellectual revival poses a fundamental challenge to the nation-state, or only advocates a modest revision. But it is clear that Jews and Jewish issues have helped spark an enormous discussion of "difference" in French society.

Certainly much of the French-Jewish project consists in learning what it is to be Jewish, beyond a vague feeling of not belonging. But it also has to do with the need to rationalize Jewish difference to the non-Jewish French, as the fascination with Jews in the French popular press shows. That a distinct Jewish population "belongs" in France is still not universally assumed, and the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen continues to grow more popular and more "respectable." French Jews are struggling to respond to old contradictions and new threats in ways that have moved beyond defensive apologetics. In the process they help articulate, for us as well, what it might mean to be Jewish in the postgenocidal, postmodern world. □

TV's ANTI-FAMILIES

(continued from p. 14)

at!" "Hmm," the boss replies. "You're not as dumb as you look. Or sound. Or as our best testing indicates."

With pointed jokes such as these, "The Simpsons" might prompt us to conclude the same about its vast audience. The harmlessness of these jokes can be taken for granted; no one who watches TV is going to stop because they see TV criticized. We criticize it ourselves as a matter of course. On the contrary, we feel flattered, and less inclined to stop watching.

And we are that much less inclined to object to the continuing presence of unsafe workplaces, vast corporations, the therapy racket, and all the other deserving targets of the Simpsons' harmless barbs. The genial knowingness of shows like "The Simpsons" subverts criticism through an innocuous pseudo-criticism, just as the familial discontents of TV shows subvert alarm at graver discontents in real life. Criticism is further weakened by the show's irony, which although less than some other programs is still pervasive and fundamental to its humor. No one in an ironic show can get too far out of line. For example, in one episode, misunderstood Lisa meets that well-worn figure of Caucasian lore, the wise and virtuous old colored bluesman, ever ready to act as mentor to young white people in their search for self-knowledge. "The Simpsons" is far too hip to hand us such a hackneyed cliché. The Virtuous Old Blues Man is as empty a conceit as the Perfect Family—so on the show, he is named "Bleeding Gums Murphy." (Why? "I haven't brushed my teeth in thirty years, that's why.") In place of the usual soulful laments, he sings the "I Don't Have an Italian Suit Blues."

Such undercutting is typical of TV as a whole; attempts to transcend the flattened-out emotional landscape of TV are almost invariably punished by some droll comeuppance. But since as bizarre cartoons there is little need to belittle them, the Simpsons get a little more than most, and are occasionally allowed moments of earnestness unmitigated by the selfishness of "thirtysomething," the weirdness of "Twin Peaks," or the inevitable "comic relief"—the stock entrances of deadpan tots and witty oldsters, etc.—used to terminate the maudlin embraces of non-animated sitcomites. None of this is to be had on "The Simpsons," but the picture it presents is still fundamentally hopeless. The Simpsons are basically boobs, and their occasional bursts of tenderness or insight are buried under biting irony and superior, if affectionate, mockery. More than any of the other "anti-family" shows, "The Simpsons" seems to come close to our lives; more than any of the other shows, as a result, it commits us to a shared vision of pessimism and self-deprecation.

Because the TV screen is neither a mirror, reflecting ourselves paralyzed in chairs in front of it, nor a window, through which we observe the antics of distant players, it is an implicit invitation to participate in a vision of "society" largely designed to flatter us in sinister ways, manipulate our attention, and commit us to the status quo. In discrediting "yesterday's" family values in its various "breakthrough" shows (ostensibly defining "A Different World" for us, as the title of one series has it), TV seeks only to impose its own values—which is to say, the values of the marketplace. Bart Simpson, master sneerer, is the prototype of the modern series character who—by the social scripts of TV—reflects us. Small, ridiculous, and at the same time

admirable for his sarcasm and enlightened self-interest, Bart is the child of the culture of TV, his parents mere intermediaries.

Paradoxically, that is why the most powerless sector of American society has adopted him, fitting him with their own wishful slogan—"I got the power!" Though black Bart's anger may be incongruous with TV, his proclamation is not, since TV is so successful an invitation to impotent posturing. At the moment, the rage of the underclass cannot be appropriated by TV, yet in black Bart, in the fatal joining of ironic hipness and earnest wrath, we see perhaps a glimpse of the future (and in fact there are already a spate of new black shows —e.g., "Fresh Prince of Bel Air," "In Living Color"). "I got the power!" says black Bart. But in the world of the TV family, no one has power. Empty fantasies of might, like cynical, knowing giggles, are terminal symptoms of our capitulation to TV's vision.

Life outside of that vision *is* ugly and is becoming uglier as ties, familial and societal, dissolve and decay. But the only power we do have is the power of our own real selves to reject the defensive posture of materialist or ironist or cynic, and the soullessness of TV's "hip, bold," anti-life world. Bart and his aspirants exist in that world, and their example serves only to impoverish us. □

PAIN AT WORK, PAIN IN FAMILIES

(continued from p. 20)

lack of compassion toward the rest of American society, and with their lack of compassion toward themselves. Movement people blamed themselves for not fully living up to their own highest ideals and were unable to accept the ways that their previous psychological conditioning had limited their chance of becoming nonsexist, nonracist, nonelitist, and nonself-interested. The ferocity of their attacks on themselves matched the ferocity of their attacks on each other.

Equally destructive, these movements attacked everyone else, making everyone outside feel that they were being put down by the Left. It is that same feeling that continues to play a decisive role in the disgust that many Americans feel toward the Democrats and toward social-change movements—they may agree with some of the programs and analyses, but they simultaneously feel "put down" and end up supporting candidates of the Right. *Tikkun* has tried to demonstrate to the various social-change movements and liberal intellectuals that a psychological understanding focusing on the pain of daily life, rather than on demands for equality and fairness, would be in *their* interests. It's one way to educate them to a new way of thinking about social issues.

But if we hoped to influence thinking in the larger society, why did we define ourselves as coming from the Jewish world? Wouldn't that necessarily limit our influence? Possibly, but we felt it particularly important to claim our own roots and our own particular historical experience as a basis for making any more universal claims. The mass defection from Judaism in the contemporary world, we argued, has been based on a legitimate distaste for the ways that Jewish life had been shaped into the mold of a materialistic and self-centered society. If Jewish life offered no counter-ethic, many Jews reasoned, why not just assimilate into the mainstream rather than separate oneself to preserve a contentless "ethnicity"—particularly when doing so required learning Hebrew and obeying all kinds of restrictive commandments? Yet the impulse to reshape Judaism in this way was itself a function of the conditions of oppression that many Jews had faced for several centuries. Reappropriating Jewishness required that we develop a deep compassion for those who had taken it in mistaken directions. Thus, forgiving and feeling compassion for one's own parents, family, people, and tribe is the necessary starting point for anyone interested in creating a mass psychology of compassion.

For me and for most of us around the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, that meant reunderstanding and accepting our Jewishness at a deep level. The focus on Jewishness, far from being an irrelevant side step, is a necessary part of the process, just as for others a renewed focus on their own particular ethnic, national, or religious roots would be essential. In fact, one of the reasons why many people have always resisted "outside" social-change agents, whether they were psychologists or activists, was this sense that these people were not "rooted" and hence were dissimilar to those they were hoping to organize or change.

And why should one's Jewishness discredit one's message? Certainly the Right had been willing to listen to the new ideas that *Commentary* presented in the 1970s. Why shouldn't liberal and progressive intellectuals, health and mental-health practitioners, policymakers and media people, social-change activists and cultural theorists be willing to participate in the discussions about social reality coming from *Tikkun* as it proclaimed its Jewishness in a positive and strong way—while simultaneously addressing social and psychological issues that have won us an audience among many non-Jews as well?

To be perfectly honest, for me the move into the Jewish arena was not simply a good vehicle for public education, but flowed from a deeper set of commitments to Judaism and to the Jewish people that I shall not try to enumerate here. A whole other story to be told describing my own personal evolution and the

deep and burning conviction that I held about the need to create a new way of being Jewish in America; but that is for a later date.

In the four-and-a-half years since *Tikkun* started, much of the educational agenda that we set out for ourselves at the Institute has been achieved. To some extent we have made it possible for a large sector of policymakers and opinion-makers to take up the original insights of the Institute. Nevertheless, we still function as a minority voice within the arena we created. Most of our writers and readers do not yet share our conviction that a mass psychology of compassion and a deepened sensitivity to ethical and spiritual realities should be a central element on our common agenda.

Moreover, creating this larger arena has generated its own dynamics. Had we only paid attention to our original psychological concerns, the intellectual, cultural, and political concerns that *Tikkun* addressed would have seemed like window-dressing, and no one would have read the magazine. If we wanted people to be able to hear our ideas, they had first to be attracted to an arena that was taking *their* ideas and *their* concerns equally seriously. By creating a magazine that was on the front line and cutting edge of many of the most important controversies in politics, culture, intellectual life, and Jewish life, *Tikkun* attracted the audience that it had hoped to reach.

Yet the task of creating a group of people who want to work together to heal and repair the pain in America's families through the development of a mass psychology of compassion is still a daunting one. In making explicit here what has been an implicit part of our agenda all along, my hope is that those who wish to work on this project will make themselves known to me. But I am also aware that there are many people in our community, including many on our editorial board and many of our writers, who have little interest in this project or little interest in seeing themselves actively involved. For *Tikkun* to work as a venture, their skepticism and distance from this project must also be acknowledged as a legitimate part of the *Tikkun* community. Yet as we approach our fifth anniversary, it seems appropriate to remind ourselves that it is this concern that underlies the original vision of *Tikkun* and helps explain why the magazine continues to be an important vehicle for fulfilling the work of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. □

FEMINISM: STILL HAZY

(continued from p. 26)

ferences. But they are no guides for the future.

Still, we need not view the future with world-weary cynicism or Reagan-bred despair. Our generation's predicament, while often daunting, has not been paralyzing. The March on Washington for abortion rights in 1988 was exceptionally well attended by young women. Other evidence of our political commitment abounds: Thousands of "post feminist" women are attempting to organize—against a brick wall of company and government opposition—into unions of clerical workers, public employees, childcare and health-care workers, and workers in the remaining manufacturing industries of the U.S., like textiles and garments. Tens of thousands of us engage in constant struggles for dignity and survival against abusive husbands and lovers at home, sexual violence in the street, and gender, class, and racial biases in welfare offices and family courts. Throughout the 1980s we have been neither "apathetic" nor "throwbacks"—as both the media and battle-scarred veterans of the sixties and seventies would have us believe. In many cases, we have been fighting for our lives.

We are, however, still left with a host of troubling questions of political strategy and substance. Will a new and probable anti-abortion swing vote on the Court move us to a reinvigorated defense of our reproductive rights? Can we effectively reverse the Reagan era's vicious—and largely successful—assaults on childcare, social welfare, and health services? How do we capture the current political moment before it passes us by?

Feminists today, especially those of my generation, need to begin by forgiving ourselves a little on the many issues of "difference." A widely inclusive feminist movement need not be staffed by scores of hypersensitive individuals; it only has to speak to material needs, and offer a credible understanding of women's treatment in this society. Thus we need to fight vigilantly for universal policies that make work and family life possible, including higher minimum wages, childcare, parental leave, national health insurance, improved schools, and the reform and enforcement of labor laws. In addition, we need to speak to women's special position as both workers and mothers, by supporting comparable worth, affirmative action, decent welfare grants, fair property distribution after divorce, and the inclusion of women's at-home work raising children in calculations of Social Security benefits. These are bread-and-butter women's issues, and they affect us all. They are radical, insofar as they are the only paths to changing women's place in the socioeconomic structure of the U.S. We need to take full measure of the position women have inherited—the "family wage" system established by employers, unions, and the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We need also to confront the estate we are coming into: the

postindustrial economy, which has brought more women into the labor market, but at relatively low wages, often without benefits, job security, or the flexibility needed to manage duties at work and home. We must make clear the link between abortion access and women's other economic and familial needs, and between reproductive and other essential state services.

Finally, we must believe that we can build a majoritarian, inclusive movement that speaks in a voice women want to hear. Despite the successes and failures of the past, and the snitty readings of this generation that have been foisted upon us, this is a goal well within our reach. Feminists today need to reaffirm our own commitment to liberation, with material survival as its necessary precursor. We must resist the temptations of a jargon-laden "spring into free space" and refuse to believe that the deepest political vision is not further away than a carefully interrogated navel. Our political moment has arrived. The time is now. □

POETRY AS MIDRASH

(continued from p. 31)

> "If you accept my Law then well and good,
> if not I'll crush you with this." They agreed.

(We are told "even the deaf could hear" in Pesikta de-Rab Kahana 12:19.)

But although this approach yielded several poems it also reduced the vast riches of the midrash and the Talmud to a few stories peripheral to the tradition and to my own emerging, ambivalent desire for an engagement with it.

My next strategy was to look at the devices my imaginative betters, the great poets of the twentieth century, had used to appropriate the biblical texts that inspired them. I made up an anthology of twentieth-century poems based on biblical passages and discovered a whole world of continuity with tradition, which required (and this is also traditional) the originality needed to respond to the Book of Job, Adam's Curse, or Lot's Wife with a contemporary sensibility. For example, the Israeli poet Dan Pagis has a poem based on Proverbs 6:6. The well-known text is:

> Go to the ant, you sluggard;
> consider her ways, and be wise.

Pagis, using a midrashic technique, started his poem with the first biblical line, inserted his response to it, and ended up with a variant on the second biblical line, namely the more disturbing injunction, implicit in the original, "consider your ways." (Pagis wisely dropped the closing injunction to "be wise.") I thought to myself, "Let me try that," and produced a midrash of my own:

Proverbs 6:6

Go to the ant, you sluggard,

and watch it lug an object
forward single file
with no short breaks for
coffee, gossip, a croissant,

and no stopping to apostrophize
blossom, by-passed because
pollen is not its job,
no pause for trampled companions:

consider her ways—and be content.

I was beginning to learn the freedom and pleasures of my tradition.

Some texts, however, produced outrage. For example, the first Psalm seemed to me to be an absurd avoidance of the problem posed by the frequent triumph of evil:

> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; . . . The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. . . . For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

For some reason I was reminded of God's provocation of Cain, as reported in Genesis 4:3–5:

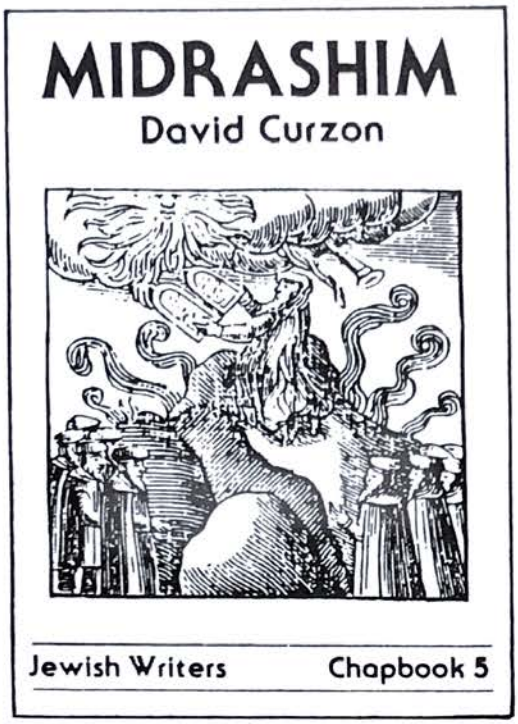
> In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel, brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, But for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

This material (in the Revised Standard Version), and my own family history, combined to produce a serious poem in a midrashic mode:

Psalm 1

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

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



MIDRASHIM
By David Curzon

"I needed some way of discovering my experiences, and moving beyond them, not directly based on my own life. After twenty years of avoidance, I gradually and reluctantly began studying the Bible and its commentaries by trying to write poems based on my reading." —From the Preface

Midrashim is a book of poems based on Biblical texts, with the Biblical passages on which the poems comment on facing pages. The Australian-born author's poems have appeared in *The New Republic, Sewanee Review,* and *Tikkun* (USA); *Tel Aviv Review* (Israel); *Westerly* and *Overland* (Australia); and have been translated into Italian, Portuguese, and Russian. "I read *Midrashim* with the greatest pleasure and found it fascinating. I consider the book a legitimate heir of the tradition because, like the old midrashim, it infuses a new strength into the ancient forms."
—Alex Rofé, Professor of Bible, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

48p. Feb. 1991. $15.00 (ISBN 0-89304-345-1); pap. $5.00 (346-X); minipap. $5.00 (348-6).
Shipping: $2.00. NYS residents: 8¼% sales tax.

Contact for free catalogue.

Cross-Cultural Communications
239 Wynsum Avenue • Merrick, N.Y. 11566-4725
Tel: (516) 868-5635
Fax: (516) 379-1901

He is like a tree that's granted
the land where it is planted,

that yields its fruit by reason
of sun and rain in season.

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

therefore the wicked are like Cain
who offered fruit which God chose to disdain,

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

The poem by Dan Pagis was the key; and through the door of my own resistance that it opened I came to the vast traditions I had been so wary of approaching. I was delighted to learn that these traditions had their own literary devices, and tried using these devices and I found they gave me the freedom to play with the text, to be outraged by the text, to be brought to tears by the text, to be surprised by the strength and nature of my responses, and to begin to discover, through these surprises, myself in my tradition. □

Relationships

Intellectual, irreverent, fun-loving SJF, 32, loves books, jazz, classical, film, travel, conversation, food. Seeks SJM, 30–42, *Tikkun*ophile, psychologically aware. P.O. Box 125, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Boston SJM, 40, public historian. Activist committed to social justice. Enjoy Chomsky, baseball, movies, Zippy, much more. Seek intelligent, caring, attractive woman. *Tikkun* Box 25.

SHALOM SINGLES connects Jewish singles interested in the arts, sports, travel, books, public affairs, etc. Nationwide. P.O. Box 1827, Germantown, MD 20875. (800) 695-SHALOM.

Services

LORRAINE ZIMMERMAN FINDS out-of-print or otherwise out of the ordinary BOOKS FOR YOU with uncanny success. Send name/address with title/author and mention ***Tikkun.*** **P.O. Box 5845, Berkeley, CA 94705. Or call (415) 601-1868.**

Tikkun Interns

***Tikkun* interns needed** for January–June 1991. Interns do the full range of *Tikkun* activities, from editing, proofreading, and reading incoming manuscripts to phone solicitations, leafleting, mailing, and other office chores. Minimum 24 hrs./wk., stipend available.

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

AFTER IRAQ:
SOLIDARITY WITH THE ISRAELI PEACE MOVEMENT

An International Conference of Progressive Jewish Intellectuals and Activists

The *Tikkun* Conference in Israel
June 23–28
at the Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem

This is the first international gathering of progressive Jewish intellectuals in many decades—a historic event you should not miss. The collapse of the totalitarian regimes that misappropriated the concepts of the Left has created new possibilities for a post-cold-war order, and for progressive social change. This is an exciting time for progressives. Yet the struggle with Saddam Hussein has created new obstacles to building a post-cold-war order, both by recrediting military expenditures and bellicose thinking, and by seeming to legitimate the fears of many Israelis that any accommodation with the Palestinians would be ill-advised.

Our conference will deal with both issues: the possibilities of the post-cold-war order and the problems facing Israel. Many Israeli peace activists have told us that now more than ever they would appreciate a meaningful gesture of international solidarity as well as the opportunity to engage in serious dialogue with activists and thinkers from around the world. But the conference will not be just a political affair: it will address broader intellectual issues facing Jewish progressives both in Israel and the Diaspora.

Tentative Program

Morning study sessions: A series of concurrent classes for four consecutive mornings—providing in-depth exploration of some of the important issues facing progressive Jewish intellectuals. Among the courses and instructors: • **Michael Walzer** on Jewish Political Philosophy • **Moshe Idel** on Jewish Spirituality and Mysticism, including Kabbala and Chasidism • **Moshe Halbertal and Michael Sandel** on the Tension Between National/Religious Solidarity and Individual Freedom • **Beni Morris** on Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism • **Leah Shakdiel** on Feminism and Judaism • **Peter Gabel** on Social Theory for a Post-Cold-War Left • **Yossi Yonah** on the History and Contemporary Reality of Sephardic Culture • **Hillel Levine** on Jews and non-Jews: the Fateful Relationship. There will also be courses on conditions in Europe; the theory and practice of human rights in Israel; Jewish religious sources for peace and justice (textual explorations); critical theory in Israeli society; and explorations of Israeli literature.

Afternoon and evening plenaries will include • Exploration of the Military Realities in a post-Kuwait crisis Middle East and the Possibility of Peace with Palestinians and Arab States: A Debate • Problems Facing the Israeli Peace Movement • Nationalism versus Tribal Values: What's Left of the Enlightenment and Rationalism? • Palestinian Leaders Describe Their Situation and Their Strategies • Coping With Jewish Fear, Rational and Irrational (including a discussion of anti-Semitism in Europe and the Soviet Union) • Analysis and Reports from the Progressive Movements in Europe • Problems Facing Jews in Progressive Social-Change Movements • Should Diaspora Supporters of the Peace Movement Call for Peace-Related Conditions on Aid to Israel? • The Decline of Coherent Theories of Progressive Social Change, and the Alleged Triumph of Capitalism • The Reemergence of National and Ethnic Tensions in Europe and Their Implications for Jews and Israel. There will also be small group discussions with Israeli activists.

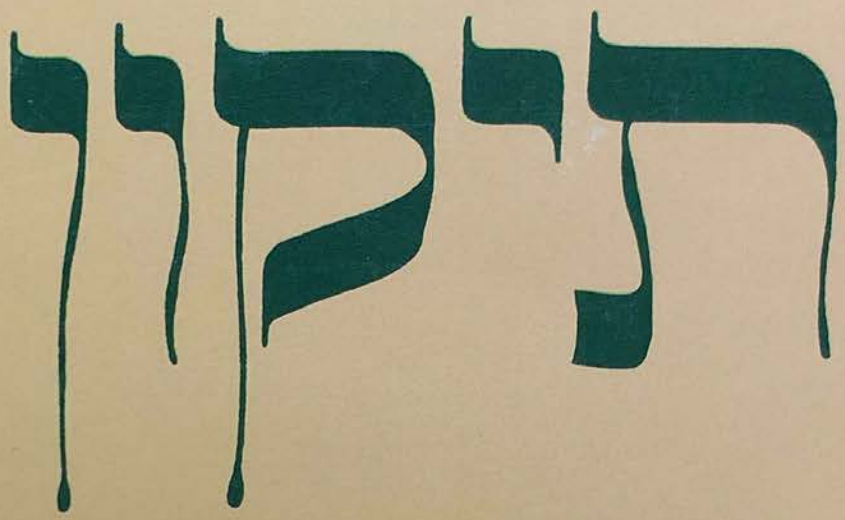
Speakers: Abba Eban, Amos Oz, Sidra Ezrahi, Avram Burg, Janet Aviad, Yossi Sarid, Shulamith Aloni, Yair Tzabam, Yishayahu Leibowitz, Menachem Brinker, Ze'ev Sternhall, David Grossman, and many more.

Will it be safe? If the Iraq war spills over to Israel, it will most likely happen through air attacks during the war's opening days. So if Israel is involved at all, it will most likely be involved for a short period sometime between January 15 and April 15. The Iraq war will loom large precisely at the moment you have to decide whether to attend the conference—but it is extremely unlikely to be going on in a way that will touch Israel during the month of June.
If you were ever planning to visit Israel, do it this June and attend this conference!

Registration: Incomes greater than $50,000/year: $450. $31,000–$50,000: $350; $17,000–$30,000: $275; less than $17,000: $225; students with no current income: $200. Some partial scholarships are available on the basis of need and in exchange for work done previous to and at the conference.

Air fare and accommodations not included—our travel agency can help you with these. Register now. (Every *Tikkun* conference so far has been sold out and people have been turned away.) Send your check to *Tikkun*, attention TIC, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619.

Tikkun (tē•kün) . . .
to heal, repair and transform the world.
All the rest is commentary.



A READER-SUPPORTED MAGAZINE

Like National Public Radio and television, TIKKUN depends on its readers' generosity to help keep its voice alive. TIKKUN ASSOCIATES donate $100 a year or more to sustain the magazine, but smaller contributions are also welcome and deeply appreciated.