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

TIKKUN

Soviet Reform: *Todd Gitlin Interviews Boris Kagarlitsky*
Personal Essays: *Sheryl Robbin and Donald Friedman*
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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1991 $5.00

THE "PC" STRUGGLE

Josh Ozersky, Evan Carton, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Gerald Graff, Christine Stansell, Arnold Eisen, Patricia Williams and Richard Perry



The Good Society
Robert Bellah et al.

Soviet Assimilation
Gail Hareven

One Man, Two Fathers
Letty Cottin Pogrebin

The Silence of the Lambs
Chris Lehmann

Power in the Groin
Bonnie Smith

Chasidic Sexuality
David Biale

POETRY

Tikkun Poetry Supplement: Philip Levine, Gerald Stern, Susan Mitchell, Thom Gunn, Seamus Heaney, Marie Howe, Allen Grossman, Brenda Hillman, Heather McHugh, Czeslaw Milosz, Patricia Traxler, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Louise Glück, C.K. Williams. With an introduction by Robert Pinsky.

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a calculation of what everyone knew

Helmut Heissenbüttel

naturally everyone knew something one this the other that but no one more than that and someone would have had to ask many questions if he had been able to but that was difficult because everyone always only got to hear this or that in this or that place today everyone knows it because everyone knows it but it is of no use any more because everyone knows it today it no longer means but that it meant something then when everyone didn't get to hear everything but rather only this or that and so on and so forth

naturally some knew somewhat more they were those who declared themselves ready to participate and who also did participate as they helped to make others into participants with force or with promises because whoever helped naturally must have also known something it could be concealed from everyone but not quite from everyone and so on and so forth

and then there were naturally some who undoubtedly knew a whole lot the middle level types who had something to say about this or that sector there they were in fact able only to administer somewhat something that had been organized these knew certain details perhaps they could have puzzled the whole thing together for themselves or perhaps they even did so but they were not brave enough and most important they were missing one thing and that was the central point that they would have had to know if they really and so on and so forth

those higher up naturally knew the most also among themselves because if they had known nothing about each other they would not have been able to do it and nothing would have worked because something like this had to work and whatever and whoever did not work had to be dealt with as was seen right from the start and even more clearly later towards the end and so on and so forth

and naturally those few who knew nearly everything really knew nearly everything and how through shared-knowing knowledge-sharers and accessories to accomplices accomplices to evil-knowers evil-knowers to evil-doers and so on and so forth because those who knew nearly everything were so powerful that they could do almost everything even turn accessories to accomplices accomplices to evil-knowers evil-knowers to evil-doers and so on and so forth they knew it alright and because they knew it they persevered because it was their task and so on and so forth and because it is possible to say that they surely knew it people today often say that it was they who but this is not entirely correct because they did not know whether it would work and that

because naturally only one person knew that but if he knew it the central point so to speak that it would work and that because it worked it would also happen and that was exactly what happened and so on and so forth that which everyone knew he naturally did not know because he could not know it he had no idea about what everyone was thinking and reflecting on and so on and so forth but in the end the reason it did work lay precisely in this that everyone knew something but only one whether it worked but did not know that it worked only because he did not know what everyone knew and so on and so forth those who knew somewhat more could do nothing without those who knew something those who knew a whole lot could do nothing without those who knew somewhat more those who knew nearly everything could do nothing without those who knew a whole lot and so on and so forth but because no one except the one knew whether it really worked they could do nothing without the one who knew for sure that it worked but did not know what everyone knew that is that they did not know whether it would work

and that's the way it worked

Helmut Heissenbüttel is a poet, essayist, and critic. This poem is taken from Textbücher 1–6 *(Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1980),* Textbuch 5, *p. 169 ff., and was translated from the German by Benjamin Frankel.*

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Letters

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

WHO'S TO BLAME FOR MIDDLE EAST TURMOIL?

To the Editor:

We were both encouraged and disheartened by Michael Lerner's editorial, "Our Problems with the War . . . And the Antiwar Movement" (March/April 1991). We wholeheartedly agree that the changes in today's world, and the war and realignments in the Middle East, are an occasion for deep soul-searching and critical reflection for Jews and progressives. Our beliefs, practices, traditions, concept of nationhood, and our vision of a better world are all up for renewal.

The pain and insecurity Jews feel today must be analyzed in the context of geopolitical developments and the economic decline experienced everywhere in the world. Jews must examine honestly the interests we have aligned ourselves with in our search for security and nationhood in the Middle East. We must ask whether these interests are indeed leading us to a secure, peaceful world.

The editorial made some important contributions in its analysis of the interplay between Jewish interests and the new-colonial designs in the Middle East. The observation that Jews have occasionally served as the "public face of the ruling class" was particularly

TIKKUN WRITERS HONORED

Two pieces that originally appeared in *Tikkun* have been selected for *The Best American Essays of 1990* (to be published by Ticknor and Fields): "Random Reflections of a Second-Rate Mind" by Woody Allen and "Seeking Home" by Dorien Ross. In addition, long-time editorial consultant Josh Weiner has been awarded the prestigious Discovery-Nation '91 Poetry Prize, which includes publication in the *Nation* and a reading at the 92nd Street YMCA in New York.

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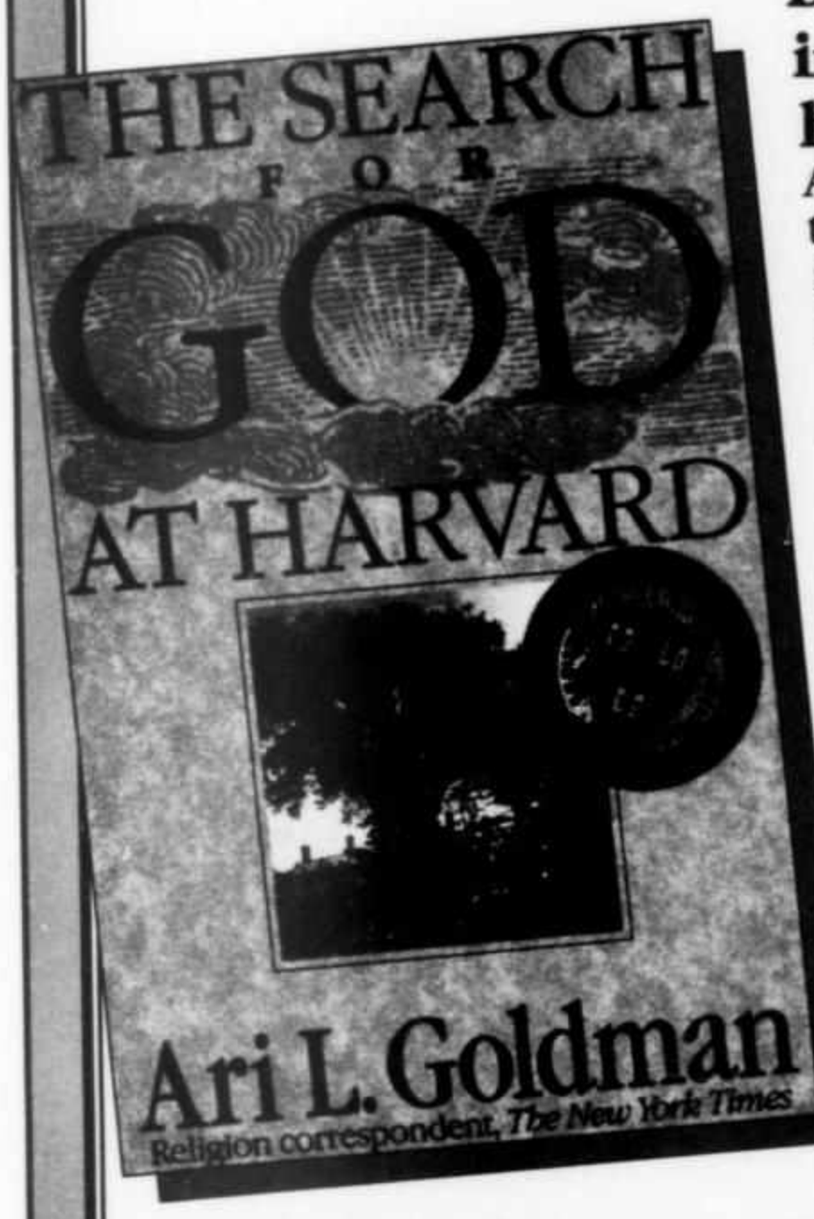
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important. We would like to add that this coincidence of proximity to power and oppression has led to ways of thinking and behaving among Jews that are well worth discussing. We particularly support Lerner's insistence on recognition of the Arab reality and how Arab desperation, fed by Israeli intransigence, leads to support of people like Saddam Hussein. As many of us have learned from family systems theory, aberrant symptoms are not a property of individuals who are evil or crazy for no reason, but rather are systemic, based on a nexus of relationships. It is our responsibility to identify these relationships and to take the leadership in overcoming the way of thinking our government and media have forced upon us.

The use of the term fascism to describe the government of Iraq and other Third World governments, however, obscures some of these basic relations. There is a difference between fascism of the weak and that of the powerful. Just as the big-time criminals never go to jail, and don't even look like criminal types, the real powers in the world can afford to appear "kinder and gentler" because of the actual brutal power they are able to exercise on a global scale. When we focus on the dangers and evils of a Hussein we run the risk of losing this deeper perspective. Similarly, when we mention the Arab attraction, based on their pain and hopelessness, to fascist and racist programs, we must at the same time mention Israelis, who are quite equal to the Arabs in this sphere, not to mention the Americans who "hunger to be part of some larger national identity that could give meaning to their fragmented lives." American "friendly fascism" may not look as onerous as the fascism of Arabs, but there it is just the same. It is Arabs who are presently suffering from Israeli fascism, not the other way around; our devastation of Iraq vastly exceeded Hussein's capacities for destruction of Israel, which in fact turned out to be negligible. It is important that we not lose sight of these basic relations.

Lerner goes on to say that "Jews have been betrayed by the Left throughout most of the twentieth century" and that our "internalized anti-Semitism" has prevented us from asserting our own interests and identities. While there is some truth here, his handling of this issue is simplistic in the extreme and hardly in the

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TIMES BOOKS

RANDOM HOUSE

constructive spirit required to address this issue. Who is in a position to define what indeed constitutes "Jewishness" or Jewish interests at this time? A little more humility is called for. The implication is that the thousands of Jewish members of the Lincoln Brigade, the tens of thousands of Jewish German and French resistance fighters, not to mention the millions of Jewish socialists and communists, were naive about Jewish interests and values. Left-wing Jews have made conscious and informed decisions about the nature of cultural and national identity, about the forces that need to be fought in the world, and about alliances that have to be made in the interest of social progress. We must look compassionately at these decisions within the real context of historical events and limitations if we are to make a positive contribution to addressing the dilemmas of the present.

The identification of Zionism as the Jewish national liberation movement is highly disputable. At the very least, Lerner's own recognition that Israel has acted as the "public face" of the ruling class in the Middle East should alert us to the fact that if this is a national liberation movement it is certainly unlike all others. Many complex issues are raised here. Suffice it to say that the relationship between nationalist sentiments and progressive movements is very complex and problematic, and Jews are hardly alone in facing this dilemma. While nationalism has a role to play at one stage in historical development, it has also held out false hopes and proven to be very limited. The whole notion of "national liberation" is in fact being reexamined by progressive forces, since neocolonialism has learned quite well how to manipulate and control "free and independent" countries and the very concept of "nation" is called into question in a global economy controlled by a few financial centers.

Lerner's attacks on the Left are based on his assertion that "surplus powerlessness" has led to self-destructive and self-marginalizing tendencies. Without disputing this concept, we would point out that before we analyze the surplus we must look at the real thing. Before we look at the Left's tendencies to self-destruct, we must look at the far more powerful forces aligned against us that have actually worked to destroy us, that control the media, and that do not hesitate to deploy a COINTELPRO or even assassins when other forms of manipulation fail. His accusation that the Left marginalized itself by failing to recognize that "there did need to be a policeman. U.S. forces were necessary" not only contradicts a considerable body of facts that were available during the war and since, but his own analysis in the earlier section. There has been substantial documentation proving that U.S. machinations with Israel, Kuwait, and Iran over a period of years contributed to Hussein's decision to take over Kuwait, and that the U.S. virtually forced the war upon Iraq when it was desperately trying to negotiate a way out. So if the Left stuck to a position opposed to deployment of U.S. troops, it was hardly its own fault that it was marginalized. This was and remains a valid, if unpopular, position. Before we look at "surplus powerlessness," we must at least acknowledge the unprecedented alliance that has developed between right-wing public-relations think tanks, the media, the military, and the executive branch of government.

Lerner's attitude toward the peace movement in this light seems to be one of "surplus antagonism." While making some valid points about the need to see Israel's crimes in a larger context, and the need to assert that Jewish national and cultural needs are every bit as valid as those of others, he is going to an extreme of presumption when he claims that "many Jews who are on the Left . . . know nothing about the details of Jewish history . . . the classics of their own tradition" etc. While this is true, it is also true that many Jews immersed in Jewish tradition have come to conclusions that differ from Lerner's. Many believe that when we focus on bringing Israel into the fold of law-abiding nations, willing to declare realistic borders and engage in negotiations for mutual arms control, then we will be in a better position to separate out what remains of anti-Semitism in opposition to Israel. Similarly, many believe that the manifestations of anti-Semitism on the Left cannot be put in the same category with the real forces that promote racism and anti-Semitism in this country.

While progressives have the right, and indeed the responsibility, to disagree with one another, certain standards must be maintained as basic to a shared outlook and to the way we approach one another. The progressive agenda is defined by partisanship with forces that seek to transform the world according to the needs and aspirations common to all peoples, and opposition to forces that seek to maintain the status quo and that promote militarism and racism. While struggling against all forms of anti-Semitism, we must maintain our basic perspective, and our respect for one another.

If we agree that "this war is a disaster for Israel and the Jews," it is hardly "betrayal by the Left" that has caused it to be so. The disaster was caused by a geopolitical realignment, as evidenced by the U.S. assuming the role of policeman in alliance with several Arab countries, a move that Lerner seems to support. The U.S. is not now and has never been concerned primarily with Israel and Jews; it is concerned with its own interests and will drop its alliance with Jews when it no longer suits its aims. It is quite happy both to have its war and to insinuate that it is the fault of the Jews. This is why it is ever more urgent that Jews think seriously about the nature of forces in today's world and decide with whom we must ally ourselves to achieve a world at peace, in which all groups can express and develop their cultures in security. In the process, we must surely reexamine what, exactly, it means to be Jewish, just as Hopi Indians, Serbs, Armenians, Catholics, and the countless other groups that make up our global family must discover what their traditions and religions mean in the modern world. We must all ask what will remain and what will be transformed as we merge, willingly or not, into a global community in which peace, security, and justice for each requires peace, security, and justice for all.

Carl Shames
Mollie Katzen
Kensington, California

Michael Lerner responds:

Carl Shames and Mollie Katzen's letter exemplifies the sloganeering and knee-jerk hostility to Zionism that I critiqued in my editorial. Israelis, we are told, are "quite equal to the Arabs" in their attraction to fascist and racist programs. But Shames and Katzen ignore that Arab states have by and large eschewed any serious commitment to

(Continued on p. 93)

EDITORIAL

When Palestinian Rocks Shattered my Windows

Notes from Jerusalem on the Paralysis of the Israeli Peace Movement

Michael Lerner

I can't pretend I wasn't scared. I had always driven this road alongside the walls of the Old City, turning up through a few blocks of East Jerusalem as the fastest way to get to the Hebrew University, but today I stopped to ask an Israeli policeman if this was still the best way to go. "Yes, straight ahead," he had told me. A few blocks later the barrage of rocks began, thrown by what appeared to be a few dozen Palestinian youths. When the glass of my car window shattered all over me I was lucky not to have been cut. But luck was not on my mind as I stepped on the gas and sped away, shaken, confused as to which way to go to safety, and not yet sure that I was alright.

A few minutes later I found an Israeli army patrol that led me to the Jerusalem police. No one at the police station had the slightest interest in going back to that corner opposite the Rockefeller Museum where my car had been attacked. "Happens all the time," I was told. There was a standardized form for Palestinian attacks in cars, which I dutifully brought from the police to my car rental company, who in turn replaced the shattered window without charge.

Conventional wisdom in the early 1980s was that a neo-conservative was simply a liberal who had been mugged. I shared the feeling of anger and upset at the sudden, terrifying indignity of violent assault. But I had no political conversion. Rocks may not bring freedom for Palestinians—but neither have their pleas to Shamir to negotiate. When Yasir Arafat said he would come to Jerusalem, Shamir announced that he would be arrested the moment he deplaned at Ben Gurion airport. Daily reports of jailings and torture of Palestinian activists add to their frustrations. Had I been born a Palestinian, I could easily imagine myself being tempted to join that crowd of rock-throwing teenagers.

★ ★ ★

But rocks are not the solution. The Israeli population must be won over. The Israelis I meet are often sensitive, intelligent, and caring. Even those who do not side with the peace movement often talk about the complicated nature of the problem, and of the absence on the Palestinian side of anyone who shows sensitivity to the fears of Israelis.

I confront several Palestinian activists on this question. Why don't they understand that Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein, and the image (however blown out of proportion) of Palestinians standing on the rooftops cheering as Scuds landed on Tel Aviv, have done incalculable damage to the possibilities for peace? Surely they must understand that Israelis need to hear a Palestinian voice that condemns all this, and that unequivocally distances itself from Saddam and all that he stands for. Yes, they assure me, they do understand.

So why not say so publicly? Don't they understand how much it would help the Israeli peace movement to have this voice as a prominent factor in public debate?

Yes, they do understand. But do I understand that every Palestinian moderate who might take such a stand gets harassed, beaten, and jailed by the Israeli police?

But surely this is not enough to account for the silence. You wouldn't let the police silence you on other matters vital to the survival of your national liberation movement. A strong Palestinian voice of rationality would make a tremendous impact on Israeli politics—why not speak out?

And then, the sad answer: we *can't* speak out, because there are others who would kill us. There is no tradition of free speech or minority dissent in Palestinian society. If the PLO in Tunis decides to change its line, fine. But otherwise, for any individual to take a stand that absolutely defies the PLO line—a stand that would look to fellow Palestinians as pandering to Israelis and playing to their concerns—is to sign her own death warrant. An Israeli friend intercedes: Don't even suggest such a thing to these people. We need them to be alive so that they can play a leading role when a Palestinian state eventually is created.

Sure, I respond. But what will keep them from being killed even *after* such a state is created? If Palestinian society does not tolerate dissent, why will that change once they obtain freedom?

There will be problems, Palestinian activists concede. But it will be different—because the violence imposed

on us by the Occupation will no longer be there, and hence the justification for unanimity in face of external oppression will be gone. It's precisely the process of obtaining a Palestinian state—through the sustained political struggle that is empowering an entire population—that helps create a Palestinian constituency who will not be willing to accept undemocratic practices once we have the power.

But, I counter, that is just what worries me. If the process is undemocratic now, what reason do we have to think it will be more democratic later?

Have *you* ever tried to create democracy under a military occupation? they respond. We get arrested and thrown into jail, precisely when we try to show moderation or caring for the Israelis. And none of what we say gets reported on the Israeli television, and little even in the Israeli newspapers. Under these conditions, you can't expect *us* to be saying what Israelis need to hear.

Shamir's tactics seem to be working. Following the logic of Zeno's paradox, Shamir has managed to divide the space between any two points into an infinite number of pieces. Each move forward is divided in two so that the ultimate end is never reached.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Baker seems to be locked into a strategy that is almost certainly a non-starter. Whatever hoopla and media hype may accompany the opening of the international conference Baker still hopes to engineer, the most likely long-term consequence will be a continuing stalemate. We should take Shamir at his word when he promises his Israeli supporters that such a conference will never lead to an exchange of land for peace.

Baker and the State Department crew believe that once the conference starts, it will generate an unstoppable dynamic toward peace. I doubt it. Shamir and the Israeli Right will portray themselves as having made the major compromise just by showing up at the conference—and will expect in return that the U.S. will reward Israeli participation by refusing to apply any pressure for substantive compromises. Unlike Camp David, which was *preceded* by Sadat's Jerusalem visit and a sudden switch in Israeli public opinion, an international conference under the present circumstances will yield little.

The only thing that could change this prospect would be for the U.S. to put forward a substantive vision of a Middle East peace solution. *New York Times* State Department correspondent Thomas Friedman argued this same case in an article in April probably aimed at catching the attention of Baker: if the U.S. is to generate support for a peace process in Israel it must offer some specific picture of what peace could look like and exactly what its role would be in guaranteeing and sustaining that peace.

Shamir knows that this is true—which is precisely why he has insisted that the U.S. play an entirely neutral role in any conference with himself and the Palestinians and that the U.S. agree from the outset that it will *not* put forward its own plan.

Shamir is an expert at deadening public debate, squelching hope, and generating mass cynicism in Israel. After the Gulf War, many in Israel expected that there would soon be a major breakthrough in the stalemated peace process. By focusing the entire discussion on the logistics of setting up a conference, rather than the conference's possible outcomes, Baker has played into Shamir's hands perfectly. One important result has been that the Israeli public has lost all interest in the daily reports of this or that nuance in the negotiations over the conference's logistics, and hence does not feel betrayed or even upset when Shamir blocks forward motion. In the U.S., Baker's efforts get plenty of attention—they represent one of the only positive initiatives of U.S. foreign policy. But in Israel the media do not make a big deal of the Baker trips—so increasingly the public pays little attention to their progress. If Baker's efforts fail, Shamir will not pay too heavy a political price. But if they succeed in creating an international conference, we are likely to face a long period in which Shamir will be attempting to obstruct any positive outcome that might emerge from such a conference.

Virtually all the people I meet in the peace camp in Israel tell me that they can't imagine changing the current deadlock unless the U.S. brings external pressure to bear. So imagine my surprise when I hear that a group of Knesset doves visiting the U.S. in May are vociferously denying the charge raised against them by Israeli rightists that the doves are trying to legitimate U.S. pressure on Israel.

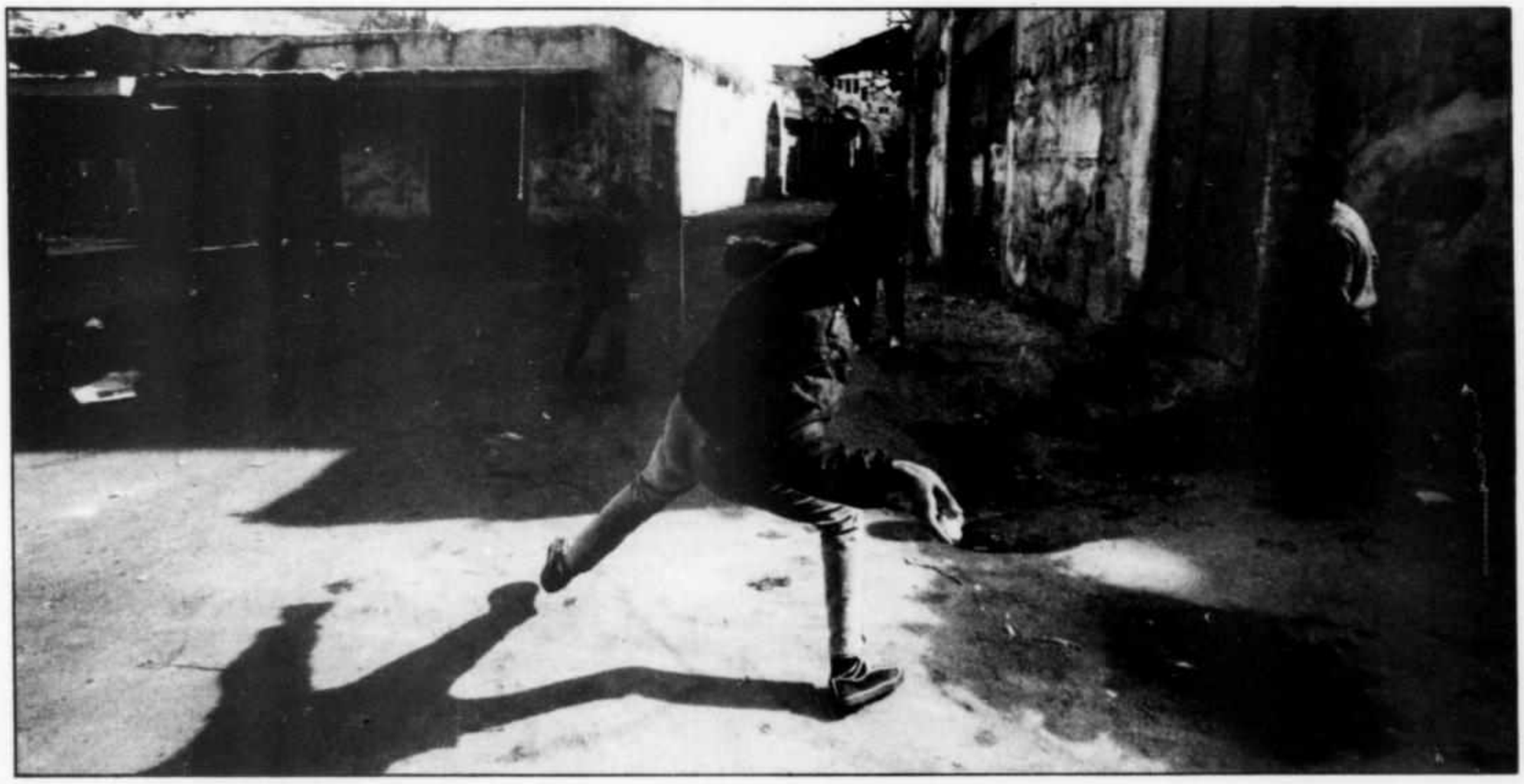
The word "pressure" is itself ambiguous, because it can mean anything from political lecturing to economic boycott. Those who argue for America to use moral suasion obviously haven't been watching Israeli politics over the past years. Over and over again the U.S. has made statements calling for Israel to bring an end to settlements, has repudiated Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan, and has asked for adherence to UN Resolution 242, which calls for an exchange of land for peace. All of these statements, however, mean absolutely nothing in Israel. In fact, their impact is worse than nothing—they create a backlash of support for the government, which can play on the fierce pride and sense of independence that has traditionally characterized the mass psychology of Israeli society. It is now all

the easier for the Right to build on this backlash since U.S. credibility—at an all-time high during the Gulf War—has taken a nosedive in the face of its betrayal of the Kurds.

But if political backlash is to be avoided, wouldn't any suggestion of economic pressure be worse? Not necessarily, according to some peace movement activists. The worst thing, they argue, would be a *little bit* of economic pressure. This would reinforce the "we are once again being betrayed" syndrome that dominates Israeli consciousness. But a *lot* of economic pressure might have very different consequences. The peace movement has long argued that Israel's intransigence on the Territories will eventually have bad consequences. These warnings have seemed empty to the Israeli public as long as the Reagan and Bush administrations have accompanied their moral warnings to Israel with *increases* in aid and military support. If, instead, there was a real and immediate possibility that the Israeli standard of living might seriously decline because of the Occupation, many sectors of Israeli society who today believe they can have *both* financial security *and* the Occupied Territories would be shaken, and would likely force the government to change course. Where symbolic cuts would create backlash, massive economic pressure could produce positive results, these Israelis argue.

Whatever the general validity of this position, I'm not yet ready to support this kind of approach. When I see the economic difficulties facing Israelis today, and when I realize that the brunt of cuts in U.S. aid would most likely fall on the poor, I'm very reluctant to support any program of aid cuts. But economic pressure can take other forms. Lately I've been floating a different idea—pressure through incentive. My specific proposal is this: Let the U.S. publicly promise Israel that it will give 10 billion dollars of aid per year for five years. This aid would be aimed at helping Israel absorb and settle Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, and would be contingent upon Israel meeting two conditions: it must begin direct negotiations with Palestinian representatives (chosen in free elections in which members of the PLO are allowed to run) before the first year; and it must conclude an agreement for a demilitarized Palestinian state by the end of the second year of the aid.

Some people might argue that the incentive program itself is unfair to Israel—after all, why should the plight of Soviet immigrants be held hostage to Israeli moves on the Palestinian front? But the answer is simple: the U.S. has its own problems with poverty and homelessness, and Americans have every right to wonder why massive escalations in aid should go to Israel before these internal problems are solved. On the other hand, it might reasonably be argued that the stabilization of the Middle East that would arise out of the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict might allow for important cuts in U.S. spending in the short run, and preclude the need for U.S. military intervention in the long run. This kind of an expenditure might actually be a net savings for the U.S., if Israel were willing to accept this kind of linkage. Incentives of this sort could have a massive impact on Israeli politics. The Russian immigrants are expected to vote for the Right. But if the hard-line policies of the



Growing up in the shadow of the intifada: A Palestinian teenager throwing stones in Nablus.

Right were understood to be the reason why monies for jobs and housing were not available, the peace movement would have a new basis of appeal in the next elections. A peace movement that adamantly supported continuation of the current levels of aid, but that also endorsed the notion of incentives, would have a good position from which to argue.

But for U.S. supporters of the Israeli peace movement, calling for any such incentives, or any other form of economic pressure, is very hazardous. Many elements of the Jewish establishment have labeled us "traitors" and "self-hating Jews" for our willingness to support the Israeli peace movement's calls for negotiations with the PLO to establish a demilitarized Palestinian state. Our response has traditionally been that we were merely articulating here what many Israelis have been saying publicly in Israel. But if we were to call for economic pressure on Israel—something that *Tikkun* has never done and which we are not doing in this editorial—we would be in the position of pushing for a policy that leading Israeli doves have carefully eschewed, a position that would greatly increase our own political vulnerability.

Yet what makes this so complicated is that many of these doves are privately telling us that they see no solution, no possibility of forward movement in Israeli politics, until this kind of economic pressure is forthcoming—and at a level that is dramatic enough to make it credible.

I understand the dilemma of many of the elected Knesset doves. They want to change Israeli policy. But they also want to ensure their own short-term political viability (a reasonable and not unprincipled desire). I feel a deepened respect for those South Africans who supported sanctions—only now do I fully understand the tremendous pressures they must have faced in making that choice. Looking back now at the powerful impact of sanctions in changing South African governmental policy, it's easy to forget how only a few years ago the right-wingers were telling us that de Klerk would never yield to sanctions, and how political moderates in the U.S. and South Africa warned us that nothing but backlash and further suffering would ensue.

But is economic pressure the only way that the peace movement could change Israel's internal politics? Not so, according to many Sephardic and Mizrachi activists with whom I am meeting.

Their criticism runs along these lines: "If these Knesset members and Peace Now people were willing to send fewer delegations to New York and Los Angeles and more to the poor sections of Tel Aviv or the settlement towns, they might have a much bigger impact. The problem is that they feel more comfortable dealing with New York liberals and wealthy Hollywood stars than dealing with those of us Israelis who are not fancy Ashkenazim. Peace Now [Shalom Achshav] has a big name in the U.S.—it's done a great marketing job there and has plenty of money to back it up. But in Israel, Peace Now has largely discredited itself, precisely because of its elitist manner and its alienation from the Sephardic majority."

This charge, I think, is partly unfair. Shalom Achshav has given some attention recently to outreach efforts aimed at the Sephardim. And some of the anger at Shalom Achshav is the historical legacy of a generalized anger at the way Ashkenazim treated the Sephardim when the Ashkenazim first arrived in Israel some forty years ago.

But Sephardic critics feel that hiring a few people to do part-time outreach in settlement towns is *not* a strategy capable of undoing the damage of decades in which the Left was perceived as hostile or indifferent to Sephardic interests. To do that, the peace forces would have to come to agreement on an economic program that paid attention to the problems of the poor. And that, it turns out, might be very complicated for some of the well-to-do elites who currently play a major role in the peace movement.

To understand the problem, consider the differences in the economic perspectives of the peace parties. Mapam, deeply rooted in the socialist Kibbutz Artzi movement, has been a major supporter of *both* peace and justice. Recognizing that the major task of the moment is to strengthen the faltering peace camp, Mapam members have been calling for a united "Peace Party" for the next election. But who are their possible allies? Ratz, the Citizens Rights Movement, has distinguished itself through its courageous work on behalf of the Palestinians. Yet apart from MK Ron Cohen, whose populist views have made him a much-admired figure among the Sephardim, Ratz is often associated with economic policies that appeal more to the upper middle class than to Israeli workers. This is even more true of the dovish Shinui party of Amnon Rubenstein, which is led by well-known free-marketeers. An alliance with these dovish parties would allow activists to articulate a peace perspective far more coherent than anything that Mapam could achieve in an alliance with Labor. But it would also be a peace party that reinforced the widespread impression within Sephardic circles that the peace camp cares little about the economic oppression that many Oriental Jews suffer.

Americans who remember that the movement against the war in Vietnam was led by *two* separate major anti-war coalitions (one devoted exclusively to the single issue of opposing the war, and the other a National

Coalition for Peace *and* Justice) may wonder why the Sephardim have not yet set up a Peace and Justice Now movement as a popular alternative to Peace Now. But in the U.S., the multi-issue coalition was financed primarily by church groups. Israel has no comparable sources of funding. The New Israel Fund strictly eschews support for political organizations; and more traditional funders would never consider aiding a Sephardic-led peace movement. So the Sephardic leaders who might have played a major role in attracting people to the peace camp can do little more than work on the sidelines, hoping to offset the damage done to peace consciousness that arises from the association of the peace message with Ashkenazic leaders who seem insensitive to the problems of Oriental Jews.

"It's not the message, but the messenger that is the problem," say many Oriental Jews. This observation is borne out in Israeli opinion polls, which indicate considerable support for the peace perspective, but also reveal that Israelis remain deeply alienated from the peace movement, and little inclined to trust it. It's the same dynamic that has bedeviled Left movements around the world. Few are willing to face the implications of this astounding reality: that though they have been very successful at communicating their message, they've been unable to win power because the people don't like them and don't trust them.

Part of the reason for that distrust is that many people feel that the Left doesn't understand them and doesn't respect the way they have chosen to live. Nowhere is this more clear than in Israel, where Sephardic Jews have often clung tenaciously to their religious and national heritage as a way to protect themselves from the cultural elitism of Ashkenazic Jews. Many Sephardim experience the aggressive antireligious secularism of the Left as yet one more Ashkenazic attempt to invalidate the culture and traditions they brought with them from the Arab lands from which they fled.

Not that the Left has no reason to be antireligious. Indeed, most Israelis have been rightly angered by the oppressive imposition of religious restrictions by legal fiat at the behest of the ultra-Orthodox parties. However, the Left has been unable to clearly distinguish between a justified assault on the religious establishment on the one hand, and contempt for Jewish religious tradition on the other. Similarly, the Left has suffered from an inability to distinguish between the right wing's chauvinistic appropriation of nationalist symbols and the deeper and potentially liberatory meanings those symbols hold for the people as a whole. As a result, the Left has developed a culture that appears to outsiders to be insensitive to the national heritage of the Jewish people.

Ironically, the Israeli Left makes the same mistake



Baker and Shamir: Will economic pressure move them?

here in its attitude toward religion and Jewish nationalism that others make in their attitude toward left-wing ideas. The form of reasoning that leads leftists to dismiss Judaism and Jewish nationalism as fundamentally reactionary ("Just look at what those Gush Emunim people are doing!") is identical to the reasoning that has led many people to dismiss all socialist ideals because Eastern European totalitarians used the language of socialism to justify their oppressive regimes. ("Since that's what revolution always leads to, we'd better just reconcile ourselves to the flaws of capitalism.") The Israeli Left might have been considerably more successful had it been able to develop a politics that built on the liberatory possibilities within the Jewish historical experience.

But it's always easy to preach about what someone should have done. The fact is that the liberal and progressive forces in the U.S. and throughout the Western world face very similar problems, and for very similar reasons. Part of the reason that the Left can't make the appropriate practical leaps in its politics is because it is stuck, as much in the U.S., Britain, and France as in Israel, with an ideological framework that fails to seriously address the human need for transcendence and meaning. Thus the Left simply has no place to understand the deep human yearnings to be part of loving relationships embodied in spiritually sensitive communities devoted to a larger ethical vision of human life on earth.

Facing the rocks of Jerusalem, one is reminded of the Jewish vision articulated through the Prophets of a new world that could embody such communities of meaning and ethical purpose. If we do not articulate such a vision—or worse, if we allow such a vision to be appropriated by the Right for nefarious purposes—the Left will be unable to grasp the opportunities within its reach. And meanwhile, I am faced with an Israel that oppresses Arabs, leftists who oppose this oppression but who render themselves impotent and largely irrelevant, and Arab kids throwing rocks through my car window. □

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The Bureaucracy that Failed: Boris Kagarlitsky on the Soviet Quagmire

Todd Gitlin

Gitlin: There is a lot of apocalyptic rhetoric in reports that come to us in the U.S. from the USSR. Do you share an apocalyptic set of expectations?

Kagarlitsky: Absolutely not. First of all, one very important thing is that even if we have any kind of catastrophe the society is not going to disappear, and Russia by the way has a long experience of living with catastrophes. So even if worse comes to worst, is the world going to end? It isn't. But speaking seriously, yes, it seems that there is a feeling among the people involved in politics in Russia that we're entering a more dangerous period in Russia and everywhere in Eastern Europe, because the vacuum that is emerging after the collapse of communism is fueled by new authoritarian forces. The Communist party is still strong and still resists the attempts of the opposition to take the power. These forces are becoming even stronger because of that. The resistance of the Communists is very often used as a pretext to sell the most reactionary brands of anti-communism.

Gitlin: In other words, you're describing polarization.

Kagarlitsky: Yes, polarization, but it's not just polarization. Very often we have kind of reactionary anti-communist semifascist mythology proposed as the only alternative to Communism, and that is really dangerous.

Gitlin: What is the social basis of these reactionary forces?

Kagarlitsky: In the Soviet Union we have the central government and the republican governments. The only real [Eastern European] parallel could be found in Yugoslavia. What is in this case typical is that there is a real struggle between the Russian central bureaucracy and the republican bureaucracy about who is going to privatize what. They're really both trying to get a bigger share of the pie, and behind that it's also a process of lumpenization and disintegration of the bureaucracy itself. And these factions are not even capable of acting as a proper bureaucracy anymore—both the Russian and the central bureaucracies. They're not even capable of administering the country; they're capable only of using their power to get some huge shares of public property and in fact to rob the country. And that is why the bureaucracies in both cases are also becoming ideologically reactionary. The Yeltsinite movement is becoming so strong because it very much reflects the real desires of the Russian bureaucracy and it uses the whole huge totalitarian apparatus inherited from certain sections of the traditional Communist system. It is used to promote the new ideas that are not better than the old ones.

Gitlin: So you're saying that the social base of both the residual Communist structure and the right wing authoritarian movements are sectors of the bureaucracy.

Kagarlitsky: Exactly. It's a very interesting thing to see the ideological development of the bureaucracy because of what happened from 1988 to mid-1990. The central bureaucracy was gradually forgetting about socialism, which was, I thought, by that time a good thing because it was no longer discrediting socialist ideas. The word "socialism" was used less and less and the bureaucracy was more and more speaking the language of New Liberalism and so on. But that was before the split between the central and the [Russian] republic's bureaucracy. The republic's bureaucracy under Yeltsin became somehow newly organized under a leader capable of really leading its struggle for a bigger piece of the pie. And it really took over the New Liberal ideological argument and privatized it and made it its own. And so what the central bureaucracy did, what Gorbachev, at least, immediately did, was to turn back to some kind of Communist

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Boris Kagarlitsky is a leader of the socialist tendency of the democratic movement in the USSR. He was elected to the Moscow Soviet in 1990. His most recent book is Farewell, Perestroika *(Verso Press, 1990). Todd Gitlin is a contributing editor of* Tikkun *and the author of* The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage *(Bantam, 1987).*

argument: speaking about the socialist choice; keeping the gains of the revolution; about being true to the history of the Bolshevik party, and so on. Suddenly Gorbachev and the bureaucracy rediscovered themselves as Communists. So it seems that this rhetoric was purely functional. But what is authentic is that both the New Liberal and communist positions use their position for very socially egoistic purposes and both ways they are getting the best out of it. The Communists use it to sell authoritarian bureaucratic practices. And the New Liberals are using it to sell the society certain policies which are not liberal.

Gitlin: So the use of all these vocabularies of politics is in your view wholly cynical. It's simply a facade for power-seeking.

Kagarlitsky: Well of course it's cynical, but there is a phenomenon of what is called in Russia self-contamination with propaganda.

Gitlin: You come to believe your own lies.

Kagarlitsky: Exactly. One person from Nogodny Karava told me about his experience during a big public meeting. He said: "Somebody comes to the podium and speaks for three minutes and after three minutes he begins to lie and after three minutes more, the public begins to believe his lies and after three minutes more he begins himself to believe his lies."

Gitlin: Because he had seen that other people have applauded.

Kagarlitsky: Exactly. It happens very fast. The main reason why all these ideas emerged was purely cynical. But then the ideology began to live its own life. It's like letting a genie out of a bottle.

Gitlin: Let's talk about Yeltsin for a moment.

Kagarlitsky: First of all, about Yeltsin's anti-communism: He's a very strange, though not uncommon, type of anti-communist, who made all his political career within the Communist political structure. That is not uncommon in this country. If Yeltsin were not a top-ranking Communist functionary, nobody would have cared about his opinion; nobody would have accepted him as a political leader for the democratic movement. For example, Andrei Sakharov was a famous scientist many years before he became a politician. So his career was not a product of his political affiliation with the system. In Yeltsin's case it was exactly his position within the Communist party hierarchy that made him such a prominent leader for anti-communist forces: that is essential for understanding what's happening in Russia. Almost all the people around Yeltsin now, almost all of them, have almost the same life story. They all came from the hierarchy, and they all became so important in the anti-communist movement because of that very reason and because of nothing else.

Gitlin: When you say "important" and "prominent" do you mean also "legitimate?"

Kagarlitsky: Partly illegitimate, according to the new logic of political life that they themselves helped to bring into being. They are creating a perverse legitimacy. For their main source of legitimation they rely upon their own positions within the very system that they are planning to subvert, because there is nothing outside the system; at least they pretend there is nothing outside the system. Second, about being democratic: Yeltsin was Party Secretary in Moscow, and he was never known as any sort of liberal or democrat within the party hierarchy. The people who worked with him in the bureaucracy always considered him to be completely terrible.

Gitlin: In what sense?

Kagarlitsky: Completely autocratic, irresponsible, not having the slightest respect for the opinions of others, absolutely intolerant, and not having any respect for human life itself. He sacked one functionary in such a terrible, humiliating way that the man committed suicide after leaving Yeltsin's office. Not a good picture of a brilliant democrat. And now I think in a certain sense he's even less democratic than he was in that period of time, because at least at that time he was not genuinely democratic, but rather dynamically, radically populist and thus trying to reflect some feelings and ideas of the population of Moscow. So he was at least kind to the people, trying to learn what they wanted. For good or bad reasons I don't know; but at least in that period he had some interest in not just telling people what to do but also listening to people below him. Not the subordinates; he never listened to the advice of a subordinate, but to the ones who were his subjects he was at least ready to listen. A Haroun al-Rashid type of tyrant. But that also disappeared completely. He learned quite a lot about manipulation techniques from the intellectuals around him. So now he realizes that he can manipulate the masses without even listening to them.

Gitlin: How? Through what means?

Kagarlitsky: Well, through propaganda, through adopting a sort of a new vocabulary, adopting a sort of newspeak that people have to say over and over again.

Gitlin: For example?

Kagarlitsky: For example, repeating that the Communist party is responsible for all the problems we have, which is true, because the Party was in power for seventy years, and making the very logical conclusion that if we remove the Party from power, the problems are going to disappear automatically. Yeltsin is using the language of a magic helper. That is discussed in Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* so we don't have to go into detail.

Gitlin: But it's very strikingly different from Václav Havel's point that all such systems rely on collusion and complicity.

Kagarlitsky: It's also the case in Yeltsin, but there are different ways to achieve complicity. There are different ways to force the people to identify themselves with you. For example, the street mobs, who are initially organized by different political groups with different ideas and with thousands of people who just came to support the democratic forces. So then the revolution of democratic forces was hijacked by a very small group of people, and they pretended that everybody who came to that meeting came there not to support general democratic demands, but to support them personally. Thus they automatically made everybody who was there accomplices after the fact and they forced all of them to make the choice either to accept the role of accomplice or to break completely with a growing movement that was becoming stronger and stronger every day. After forcing at least some of the political forces and groups into this position of de facto accomplice, the reactionary forces used all this newly acquired legitimacy to marginalize the others who didn't accept their rule. You see, I'm just taking one example from the street politics, because they started case by case, demonstration by demonstration. And that was a conscious strategy: selecting the orators a certain way, referring to the old meetings and demonstrations and pretending that the new demonstration was a sort of continuation of the old one when really it was an evident shift in this movement. That is, by the way, exactly what the Communist party did for so many years—both in Russia and Eastern Europe. The whole Party history was written in order to prove that the Party line was always the same, when in reality it was changed several times. So reactionaries just learned from the experience of the Communists.

And when it comes to Yeltsin, he was the first in the Soviet official hierarchy to meet the representatives and leaders of Pamyat publicly.

Gitlin: When did this happen?

Kagarlitsky: Nineteen eighty-six. But you understand what it means ... sometimes it isn't well understood what it means for a top-ranking official to meet with guys like that: it automatically means legalizing the entire organization. There were other unofficial organizations equal in size to Pamyat, none of them ever received any attention.

Gitlin: For example, which organizations?

For their main source of legitimation Yeltsin's brand of anticommunists rely upon their own positions within the very system that they are planning to subvert.

Kagarlitsky: The Club for Social Initiatives, which was socialist-liberal. Most of the liberal and socialist groups were offspring of the Club for Social Initiatives. It never received any sort of positive recognition or even public attention, though Yeltsin was very well informed about our activities.

Gitlin: So do we know what went on in this meeting with Pamyat?

Kagarlitsky: The best source about this meeting with Pamyat was Yeltsin himself. Because as late as 1989, having already been elected to the Congress of People's Deputies, he did an interview saying that first of all, it was absolutely correct to meet Pamyat; and second, Pamyat is basically a very good, very positive movement though there were some extremist elements, and that he had worked constructively to separate the progressive, positive elements in Pamyat from the negative ones and that was his purpose. Even if he made any sort of real attempt to separate the most extremist Pamyat leaders from the more moderate ones, it automatically had a meaning of trying to help them to become more legitimate, of helping them to gain some sort of acceptance from the public. After that, I went to one of Yeltsin's

advisors and asked him whether Yeltsin was really anti-Semitic and his response was, "No, he just doesn't like the Jews."

Gitlin: So this was in 1989 that you had this conversation?

Kagarlitsky: It was in late 1989—the period of Yeltsin at his democratic best.

Gitlin: How do you interpret this, "He just doesn't like the Jews"? Is it possible to distinguish between his personal predilections and his orientation in policy or does it amount to the same thing?

Kagarlitsky: Of course it's difficult to theorize on this issue. But it has a meaning: Though he doesn't like the Jews where he is concerned as a private person, it is not automatically reflected in his politics. But nevertheless, I think we must then ask the question of why it is not reflected in his politics and I think it is very much for tactical reasons. Because Yeltsin, by the way, is very instrumental. He's a manipulator. That means that, for example now, he wants to use intellectuals who wouldn't like him to be openly anti-Semitic and he's doing it. Probably later he could find it useful to be anti-Semitic. Not because he's so strongly anti-Semitic, not because he feels so strongly about it, but for the same reason: because he finds it useful.

Gitlin: Tactical?

Kagarlitsky: Tactical. But if this sort of instrumental approach is normal for a politician of this level it is extremely dangerous—in a certain way it's even more dangerous than somebody who is seriously and openly racist or anti-Semitic. It's very easy to block an avowed racist and to prevent the public from accepting some of his ideas. Those who are just manipulators are much more dangerous.

Gitlin: Readers of *Tikkun* might be interested to know what the various political forces are saying about the exodus of Jews to Israel at this point.

Kagarlitsky: Of course no one who is involved in Soviet politics right now feels positive about the exodus of the Jews, for the very reason that the country loses not only citizens but also quite a lot of professionals as well, and educated people. It's not even a question of the Jews.

Gitlin: A brain drain.

Kagarlitsky: It's a brain drain and a skills drain, and you can look at that in another way, because now the Jews, fortunately or unfortunately, are not the only population in exodus. The Germans are leaving, the Greeks are leaving. Almost every minority that has some kind of real or symbolic motherland is now devastated by exodus. The exodus of the Germans is a more serious problem: the Jews are deeply rooted in the Russian culture and society and quite a high portion are going to stay whatever happens, absolutely whatever happens. I'm not so sure about the Germans, especially because after the war the whole nation was exiled to Siberia and Khazakstan; the Jews suffered quite a lot but not to that extent. There was not an attempt to exile all the Jews; though Stalin planned it, he didn't have time to realize his great project. The Germans *were* exiled. One must understand that for the Germans, especially because they still managed to keep their language and sometimes their religion, it is much easier for them to cut the ties with Russia than for the Jews. Because also culturally their connection to Russia became a very important element of the culture of the Russian Jewish community. In that sense, there's something about being Jewish in Russia, as well as being Jewish in America. It was a very special kind of Jewish subculture that emerged in this country in the last century. There is also a very strong feeling that the Jews contributed greatly to the achievements of the country and thus just forcing the people to leave somehow is expropriating them.

Gitlin: Irving Howe told me last year that Yevtushenko had said to him that the Jews were leaving and this was going to be a catastrophe for Russian culture.

Kagarlitsky: I don't believe that we'll leave as a community. The one important thing about the problem of Jewishness in Russia is that the Jews became sort of half-assimilated but never became fully assimilated and never agreed to become assimilated. What does this mean? Even from the ethnic point of view, it means that, for example, in the second generation teens from mixed marriages usually married each other. I think this phenomenon of semi-Jewishness and self-perpetuating Jewishness, this half-assimilated state, is going to reproduce for generations. This is strengthened by the emergence of Israel and sometimes by very Zionist sympathies, which I don't like very much but which are real among these semi-Jewish people.

Gitlin: Not that they want to go to Israel.

Kagarlitsky: Absolutely not, but they identify themselves with Israel very strongly. So this phenomenon is almost

unreported and is not referred to by anybody except, I think, Alexy Aksonov, the Russian writer, who once or twice mentioned this phenomenon in his articles, calling this the "slightly Jewish" phenomenon. Slavo-Jews, you could call them, or Russo-Jews. But it's a very specific phenomenon, very typical of Russia. People of this community are also leaving in great numbers, so when you see the statistics it's not clear who is leaving, the real 100 percent Orthodox or the ones not-so-Jewish. There is quite a serious proportion of both types remaining. While the exodus is a great drama, it's not a catastrophe.

Gitlin: How would you expect these ex-Soviet Jews to think once they get to Israel, in political terms?

Kagarlitsky: Well, unfortunately there is already an answer from the previous emigration, in the seventies. The Jewish immigrants in Israel are becoming more Zionist than anybody born in Israel and they are swallowing the most right-wing, most extremist kind of Zionist propaganda. The ones who are getting to the United States are becoming mostly right-wing, racist, conservative in the worst sense of the word. And there are Russians and probably some Jews emigrating to South Africa, and I predict that some of them will join the police force and will be very happy beating the Blacks and so forth. This is another great problem of people who somehow escape from oppression. Rather than fighting against the principles of any oppression they counterbalance it: they strive to be accepted as part of the oppressors, which was not possible in the previous situation.

I don't want to say that all people leaving are like that. There are also some liberal people, in the best sense of the word, who also for certain reasons have to emigrate. On the other hand, the people who remain tend to be more responsive to more left-wing progressive socialist propaganda. In that sense the Socialist party is already accused of being a sort of new home for radical Jews.

Gitlin: We talked already about the Communists and the populist nationalists, nouveaux anti-communists. Let's talk about the Left, of which you're a prominent member. What are the prospects, what is the strategy?

Kagarlitsky: What is important for us now is the creation of real self-perpetuating, self-reproducing unions. Unions not part of somebody else's political project, but unions themselves as social organizations capable of influencing and producing political projects. By the way, even the so-called unofficial trade unions haven't tried that yet. What really happened was that the democratic opposition decided to have its own unions to fight against the Communists and to use the unions as tools to garner additional social support rather than addressing the workers' interests. That is why the unofficial trade unions failed completely in Russia. The only occasion where they did not fail was the independent union of miners—which was a much weaker union than could be expected after the miners' strike. And that's why the workers preferred to stay in the old unions: not because they liked them very much, but because they had nowhere to go. Now, our position is that since the workers decided to stay in the old unions it's probably much better to try to have the reformist wings of the old unions reform the old unions. But that isn't really happening.

Gitlin: Why then would workers now, being skeptical about factions or other parties or personal followings, be interested in your reform factions or reform tendencies in the old unions?

Kagarlitsky: First of all, the old unions are so big that they've got certain interests of their own. Not just the interests of their members, but at least the low- and middle-level bureaucracy has a positive self-interest. And this self-interest cannot be realized unless they manage to convince their members that they need their support to defend their social rights because they don't have the property to privatize. The property is privatized by the highest levels of the bureaucracy, not by the lower and middle levels. At the same time they are very big and the bureaucrats want to keep their positions, so there is a growing pressure for the restructuring of the unions for the creation of a strong, efficient union. The unions need some bureaucracy just to work, that is not so bad. The unions are essential to have some kind of organized labor movement, without which you cannot have a really strong Left. Look at the U.S. The weakness of the unions and the weakness of the Left are very much connected. The fact that the Left in the U.S. is more or less ghettoized in the universities I think is due to the fact that the labor unions are either corrupt or weak or unable to form any sort of good bureaucracy inside themselves that is efficient and thus can make the organization efficient. We are really very much afraid of the American case. It's a negative case. Radical academia, radical universities, a brilliant radical left-wing intellectual tradition with almost no serious political Left. There is some, but limited. That is why for us, creating the real social structure that should be behind any political left-wing project is essential. And then the next step would probably be the creation of the Labor party.

Gitlin: Going back to this earlier stage, it's not easy to organize a tendency within a union. Generally speaking,

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Glasnost in the Promised Land

Gail Hareven

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Soviet immigrants, like all immigrants, are cautious. Israelis sometimes find conversations with the new *olim* difficult, filtered as they are through a haze of blandly reassuring slogans. "All is well," a new arrival will typically report; and then contradictorily add "only there are a lot of problems." Or again: "Well, you need patience"—a phrase picked up first in the *ulpan* and then ritually intoned to the *olim* throughout the Israeli bureaucracy.

In more wide-ranging questions of politics, the *olim* seem chiefly to resort to bigger slogans. *Ulpan* students frequently use Zionist rallying cries that aren't heard in Israel anymore, except as parody. "The time has come to make aliya to our country and to live under our flag"; "Israel is the Holy Land"; "We are all one family and we are all in our country."

"In the Soviet Union people also talk in slogans. Think about the youth movements in Israel during the fifties. That kind of education filters its way into the soul," says Dr. Shmuel Ben-Dor, a psychologist and anthropologist at Ben Gurion University.

But some Zionists who made aliya in the 1970s find it difficult to listen to the rhetoric of the new wave of immigrants. "Some *olim* arrive at the airport and immediately feel the need to beat their breast and declare, 'I was always a Zionist,'" observes the well-known refusenik Yuli Edelstein, director of the Russian department of the Institute for Jewish-Zionist Education. "Those are the ones I want to ask, 'Where were you ten years ago?'"

Edelstein may be offended by the slogans, but many Russian *olim* seem to feel that using Zionist rhetoric may provide necessary protection. A similar caution is reflected in the way many new Russian *olim* talk to Israelis. When the Israeli newspaper *Hadashot* brought the hundred thousandth Russian immigrant to the Ben Gurion airport to greet the two hundred thousandth as he arrived, the advice the former gave was stark and symptomatic: "Learn not to talk too much; don't say a lot of things." An accountant in a carpet factory delivers much the same message more subtly; she praises another new arrival for wanting to "contribute to the country"—thereby tacitly instructing her listener in the narrow range of things that can be said.

"Their art is to please people," says Dr. Sagi Cohen, a professor of history and the philosophy of science at Tel Aviv University and the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, who is active in organizing cultural exchanges between the Israeli and *olim* intellectual communities. "Contact with them is like water off a duck's back. I meet with them, they tell me exactly what I want to hear, and afterward they don't come to meetings with the Israelis."

These first shocks of cultural misunderstanding are often reciprocal. Israelis, for their part, tend to view the Soviet exodus through the prism of Soviet anti-Semitism. Doing so reaffirms the State of Israel's raison d'être—a crucial need in a weary, pessimistic society that is gradually being overtaken by a mounting sense of crisis.

Not surprisingly, Soviet immigrants are often eager to appease this psychic need. The *olim* constantly invoke the specter of Soviet anti-Semitism, as though the reminder of their persecution secured their right to absorption. "Gorbachev doesn't do anything to stop the anti-Semitism in Russia," one *ulpan* student says. "He really wants the Jews to make aliya. I think he is actually an anti-Semite himself." "It is possible to meet up with anti-Semitism all over Russia," another student explains, "at work, in school, on public transportation. Israel and the Jews are blamed for all problems."

Seeking perhaps to compensate for the abuses they suffered at the hands of the Soviets, the immigrants rush to affirm their Jewish identity. "During the first stage, some of the *olim* develop a sentimental attitude toward religion. They are completely ignorant about Judaism, but are ready to adopt immediately all of the symbols," explains Masha Bouman, a doctoral student of Russian

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Gail Hareven is an essayist, literary critic, and playwright in Jerusalem and a political columnist for Ma'ariv.

literature who works with groups of immigrants on the question of Jewish identity. They are intrigued by even the little displays of faith: the absence of public transportation on Shabbat, for example, which seems so different from the secularism of the Soviet Union. New immigrants are initially eager to embrace a Jewish identity about which they knew little when they first arrived in Israel. But after a short time the initial romance weakens. "We began to realize how inconvenient the absence of public transportation really is," continues Bouman. "Most of us now perceive religion as limiting freedom." In a poll released in May 1991, 80 percent of Russian *olim* reported that they see themselves as "nonreligious." Seventeen percent described themselves as "traditional," and only three percent as religious. Among Russian students under thirty, 86 percent identified themselves as non-religious. This is a profoundly secular aliya.

The writer Maya Kaganskaya, who came to Israel in 1977, can be counted among that small minority of *olim* who have penetrated into the heart of Israeli culture. Despite her good Hebrew, she still writes in Russian; her translated articles appear in Israeli journals and newspapers, where they arouse considerable interest. Yet the new immigrants disturb her; they often force her to confront aspects of her identity that she may not have entirely transcended.

"I don't like the Russian mentality, and I don't want it to influence Israeli life," says Kaganskaya. "Israelis see us Russians as highly cultured, but they fail to see that in many fields Russian culture is highly disconnected from important advances in Western culture, and that the Russians are not aware of being cut off. For the Russians, culture consists only of Tchaikovsky's arias. But Russians have little understanding of the advances in thought that have happened in the West in the areas of economics and politics ... in fact, politics is for Russians an undertaking that dirties those who engage in it. The Russian intellectual loves metaphysics, but the combination of politics and metaphysics is dangerous for Israeli society. With us Russians the tone is always dramatic and tragic. Even the weather report sounds like a heroic plot. Israelis don't need to turn everything into tragedy, because reality creates their tragedies."

Yulia Mirsky is a clinical psychologist who came to Israel when she was 11 years old, and is currently working at a counseling program for Russian students. Responding to the harsh criticisms of Kaganskaya, Mirsky concedes that she has heard similar comments from many *olim* who came during the seventies, and she tries to explain. "Aliya," she says, "is a situation of existence that never ends. When a person separates from a country, he has to deny a part of himself, and with ideological



A Soviet immigrant brings his old life into a new land.

aliya, this is especially apparent. In meeting with the *olim* who are coming now I am also confronting the part of myself that is in denial. Which part of me? The Russian part, the hardened, paranoid side." When she delivers lectures, Mirsky observes, "I catch myself trying to negate anything Russian."

Mirsky agrees with Kaganskaya's account of the Russian differentiation between culture and politics: "I assume that they won't be involved in politics for a long time. Probably in the next elections a lot of them won't even vote."

By contrast, Soviet immigrants tend to view the political climate in Israel as alarmingly naive, which is to say not paranoid enough! Israelis "just don't know how to be suspicious," says Bouman. She goes on to relate a story about a couple of *olim* whom she worked with. Every day, they would fiercely debate the question of who really manages the world. One of them maintained that the KGB was behind the global scenes, and the other insisted that Mossad was the force majeure. "The graduates of Soviet culture," comments Bouman, "are apt to see Israelis as having a dangerous political naiveté."

During one of the first days of the Iraq war, I watched a television news broadcast with one of the immigrants. On the screen were huge piles of rubble from buildings in Ramat Gan. The newscaster reported that there were no fatalities. The *oleh* sitting beside me did not believe it. I tried to explain to him that in Israel there is no possibility of covering up that kind of information. The country is just too small, and if someone were to catch the IDF spokesman in a lie, nobody would believe him

anymore. The immigrant nodded politely, but didn't look convinced. "A bad explanation," Bouman tells me later. "With us, the Russians, it is clear that the government lies and that they couldn't care less if anyone catches them."

Mirsky sees suspicion as the natural product of a society that withholds information; she hypothesizes that life in a society that makes information readily available will breed more trust. For the time being, the immigrants are highly suspicious of anything official, and this mistrust serves to protect them from the manipulations of political interest groups. They go to *ulpan* on a kibbutz, receive food and lodgings, learn Hebrew, then leave as soon as they find work in the cities.

Soviet immigrants tend to view the political climate in Israel as alarmingly naive, which is to say not paranoid enough.

Professor Michael Agorsky, a Sovietologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who also made aliya during the 1970s, is worried about the culturally chauvinist and isolationist tendencies within the intelligentsia of the new Russian *olim*, particularly if these tendencies find expression in political demands. Agorsky argues that part of the intelligentsia perceives itself to be above national concerns and to a large extent anti-Zionist. This group of Soviet intellectuals see Israel primarily as a political umbrella, and not as a Jewish state. "We are talking about some of the immigrants from Moscow, Leningrad and Ashkenazis from Kavkaz, who functioned there as representatives of Russian culture. They relate to the Israelis with the same disdain that they related to Moslems there. They want Israel to be a cultural extension of the Great Russia. The New Alexandria is how they call it in the newspapers. For them, Israelis are second-class people, and Arabs ... they have no right to exist."

I find this difficult to understand. If they are talking about canceling all of the symbols and signs of the Jewish State, if they are demanding to recognize Russian as another official language in Israel—as Arabic is—it seems as if there is a positive basis for dialogue with the Israeli Arabs. I'm perplexed because I assume that once the Jewish symbols are gone from the definition of Israeli identity, there may be fewer obstacles to integrating Arabs more fully into the State of Israel. "Don't look for logic," answers Professor Agorsky. "We are talking about cultural snobbery. The presence of the Arabs, in the *olim*'s consciousness, causes nationalism, and therefore the snobbery gets tried out on Arabs because they are a clear-cut nationalist element. Their opposition to the Arabs is a copy of their opposition to the ethnic minorities in the USSR, and therefore they will demand to throw them out. In their eyes, Arabic isn't a language, and the Arabs aren't a people. Jews, maybe ... so be it."

Agorsky says that among the *olim* of the 1970s it was considered unfitting to read the Russian-language press in Israel. Today, the daily circulation of Russian newspapers is twenty-five thousand; one weekly that formerly sold four thousand now sells over forty thousand. Antinationalist intellectuals find an influential forum in many of those newspapers; Agorsky is worried enough about antinationalist sentiments to propose immigration quotas in order to slow down the absorption process; and to establish cultural assimilation as a precondition of absorption.

Sagi Cohen, in his role as intercultural go-between, finds that, slogans to the contrary, the *olim* stubbornly cling to notions of their own cultural superiority. "If there is something that characterizes them, it is their unwillingness to be absorbed. As the aliya becomes more advanced, they are less and less interested in any kind of a meeting that doesn't show immediate utility. As far as they are concerned, we should learn Russian. In their opinion, we are barbarians. About what is related to theater, opera, and ballet they are absolutely correct; but in other areas they are decades behind what is happening in the West."

"For Israelis I think the culture isn't on a high enough level," says one young immigrant. "They hardly go to the theater. They don't read books. Therefore it isn't interesting for me to talk with Israelis." "It is hard for me to say that an Israeli has any taste in art," declares another teenager. "For culture he prefers belly dancing, for food *burekas,* for politics 'Transfer.' But he is willing to die for his country, because he loves his homeland, or at least that is what he says."

"They tell me they want to look like the sabras, so they won't be teased," says Naomi Sklovin, who works at the Institute for Jewish-Zionist Education, "and at the same time they assert that there is no culture here, that our society is Levantine, Oriental. Many of our grandmothers who came from the high cultures of Western Europe felt the same way."

Kaganskaya argues that the *olim*'s resistance to professional and cultural exchange is a symptom of the insecurity and lack of self-confidence characteristic of all immigrant experience. The profession, for example, becomes the important, continuous element of the

immigrant's identity; why jeopardize it by exposing it to the scrutiny of native elites? Disdain for Israeli culture, Kaganskaya maintains, is an outgrowth of the state of exile. For years these people didn't want to hear about Israel; suddenly they are rejected by the country that they considered to be their homeland, and are obliged to come. No wonder they feel ambivalence, and sometimes even hatred—and these emotions get directed at Israeli culture.

"The Russian person feels like he lives in an Empire," says Mirsky, "a citizen of a state of giants. Israel is small and therefore perceived as provincial. I was used to huge expanses. It is hard to describe what happens to a person who comes from Leningrad to Be'er Sheva. There is a feeling of imprisonment, a lack of stimulation."

But despite the snobbery and restlessness, many Russians feel a genuine enthusiasm for Israel. Immigrants frequently refer to their happiness with political freedom, the mild climate, the safety in the streets. And over and over again the *olim* praise the free economy and material abundance symbolized most dramatically by the Agron street supermarket in Jerusalem. Go into the supermarket any evening and you will find Russian immigrants walking around as if in a museum, looking, touching, smelling. "Have you seen anything yet?" I ask Misha, who has been in Israel for only 24 hours. Yes. Misha has already made the ritual tour of the Agron street supermarket! Tomorrow perhaps he will go to the Wall, but first things first.

They may not always like Israelis, then, but many Russians are excited about what they find in Israel. And according to reports from the West, the response of Russian immigrants to the U.S. or Europe is similar. The same mix of cultural elitism and appreciation of the material prosperity leads to the same attitude of, "I like this country a lot but I can't stand the people." Kaganskaya tells me about Russians whom she met in France who described Paris as a city without culture. Maybe the French had culture in the nineteenth century, they admitted, but now—nothing!

Yet a people cannot be understood without also understanding the cultural symbols of its society—and here many Russian immigrants have encountered considerable confusion. Cultural meanings and codes brought from Russia often generate deep misunderstandings about Israel or Israelis. The Russians see symbols in Israel that they think they understand, but actually these same symbols have a very different meaning in the Israeli cultural context. So Russians see kibbutzim flying a red flag and they think that this means that they are dealing with communists. Or Israelis play Israeli songs based on Russian melodies, thinking that this is the sort of cultural interaction that will please the Russians. Yet the Russians know that many of these tunes come straight from the Communist party anthems and feel insulted or depressed as they are reminded of past oppression. Even the informal open-collar style of the Israeli Labor movement, a cultural symbol from the 1920s and 1930s that indicated simplicity and anti-hierarchical sentiment, reminds some Russians of the elitist stance of Russian intellectuals of the 1960s who dressed similarly and talked of "going down to the people."

"I know that from my experience in Russia, the thing that frightens me the most is the continuation of the intifada, the war from within. At least when you are in a war with an enemy from the outside you know how to fight."

Similar cultural misunderstandings surface in everyday social life. On their first date a young immigrant boy invites an Israeli girl for a walk on the beach. Walking around different places is a common form of entertainment in his homeland. The girl breaks the date because according to her cultural code, a walk on the beach spells an immediate sexual advance.

"It is a Russian gentleman's responsibility to court a woman, and treating her like a lady is part of the respect that he must give her," says Bouman. "When I came to Israel I didn't know that I could open a door for myself, or get off a bus without someone offering me a hand. An Israeli man offered me a ride, and before I got out he asked me, 'Tell me, are you married?' 'If I am married,' I told him, 'it means that you have to try harder. Write me a poem, pick me a flower!' Israeli men don't understand romance. With you Israelis, sex is degrading. In Russia life was very ugly, so we tried to create beauty in love.'"

For many of the immigrants a difficulty arises in recognizing a Jewish identity defined neither by anti-Semitism nor religion. They are intrigued by the idea of Jewish education, but they distinguish clearly between knowledge and religious practice. Most of the *olim* I have spoken with view religious legislation as anti-democratic. Many immigrant families have already had complicated run-ins with the Rabbinic Courts, and other immigrants fear that non-Jewish relatives will have trouble gaining entry into Israel. Such experiences often make the *olim* hostile toward more religious Israelis.

Yuli Edelstein reports that immigrants sometimes greet discussions of Jewish identity as "indoctrination." *Olim* who came from the Islamic republics are somewhat different since they preserved some traditional practices. On the balance, however, the one thing observers agree on is that the massive influx of Soviet immigrants means that the religious parties stand to lose as much as half of their popular electoral base in the upcoming elections.

Zina Levitchik is a pediatrician from Baku. She has been reminiscing with the Givon family. The Givons are adopting Levitchik's family under the auspices of the *Re'ut* project of the Israeli Forum, which tries to match Israelis and immigrants according to shared features in family background. Four thousand Israeli families are already part of the *Re'ut* project.

"I remember you brought us a traditional package of cakes and sweets," she laughs at Sigalit Givon. "So that must have been for Purim. Or maybe Pesach? There isn't a *mishloach manot* on Pesach?" Before meeting the Givons, Zina and her husband were visited by an Orthodox family who contacted them independently. "They are a very nice family," Ms. Levitchik stresses, "but the husband doesn't work, he only studies in a yeshiva and we aren't used to that. He tried to influence us to send our son to Cheder, and I was pretty confused. I didn't understand, everything was so new, but I knew that I wanted to stay who I am. When we met Sigalit and Zeev, we understood that it is possible to celebrate holidays differently, that there are people who live in Israel similar to the way we knew."

"We don't have any religious education. We are Jews only by birth," says Alexander Fein, a musician who has been in Israel for fifteen months. "In Russia I understood I was a Jew only because of anti-Semitism. In Israel I understand that I have a Jewish spirit. But if this is a free country then everyone should live the way he chooses, and the proposed law forbidding the sale of nonkosher meat seems stupid to me. When they make laws according to Halacha, it means that only the Orthodox will be able to live here."

"I came to Israel," says Maya Kaganskaya, "in order to be Maya, the individual and the Israeli, and to stop being Jewish."

Such sentiments have led many to hope for the emergence of a faction of political activists who are secular, liberal, and centrist. "The social program of the Citizens' Rights Party could fit most of the *olim*," says Kaganskaya, "but the CRP supports a Palestinian state, and the party leaves the *olim* with the impression that the objects of their interest and political action are only the Arabs."

A poll conducted last September suggests that the hopes that the plan will constitute a strong liberal or moderate faction may be misguided: about 70 percent of the *olim* questioned supported the right-wing parties.

It is possible that in the absence of cultural meaning of Jewish or Israeli identity, the immigrants are holding on, for the time being, to anti-Semitism as the chief feature that defines their Jewishness. Accordingly, they are tempted to cast the Arabs in the role of the archetypal goy, the perpetual hater, who relieves them of the burden of self-definition.

"Walking in the Old City of Jerusalem is just like Russia—the same danger for Jews," says Vladimir Pushkin, an aliya activist from Leningrad visiting Israel.

"Some of the students blur the difference between the PLO and Pamyat," says Leah Praver, who teaches an immigrant high-school class, "but with time most of them develop a more complex perspective."

Time, it turns out, is a significant factor in solidifying a political orientation, and some immigrants are already reporting a change in their perspective. "I came from a country which threw people out of the places where they had lived for generations, like the Tartars or the Turks, and therefore when I first came to Israel I believed that 'transfer' was the solution," says Alexander Fein. "Now I know that there are people here who have been living on this land for generations, and I don't want to send them away, just like I don't want them to send my grandchildren away one day. There has to be peace here, but I don't have the recipe. I need to live here for a few years, to learn the language and the culture and to become part of the society; only then will I be able to form my opinions. I know that from my experience in Russia, the thing that frightens me the most is the continuation of the intifada, the war from within. At least when you are in a war with an enemy from the outside you know how to fight."

"One must remember that we come from a society where millions of people were transferred from place to place; someone growing up with this knowledge can think that it is a terrible thing, but he can also tend to think that it is within the realm of the possible," says Masha Bouman. "It is true that together with this we also bring our experience as a minority group, and that can be a basis for empathy. But among refugees the feeling is: if it is between me or the other guy, then I come first, because I already had to flee." Bouman and Kaganskaya both believe that the new *olim*, coming from a social order based on authoritarian force, will view relinquishment of the Territories as a show of weakness. But as the views of Alexander Fein and others suggest, the experience of absorption can temper initial hardline sentiments.

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Ejaculatory Prayer: The Displacement of Sexuality in Chasidism

David Biale

In the waning years of the eighteenth century, David of Makov, a follower of the great Lithuanian rabbi, Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, wrote a devastating critique of Chasidism, the pietistic movement that was sweeping the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. He accused the Chasidim of many excesses, not the least of which were sexual:

> The Chasidim commit the sin of involuntary ejaculation at all times during their prayer, for they deliberately give themselves erections during prayer according to the commandment of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem [the founder of Chasidism], who said to them that just as one who engages in intercourse with an impotent organ cannot give birth, so one should be potent at the time of prayer and, in prayer, it is necessary to unite [sexually] with the Shekhina [the female emanation of God]. It is therefore necessary to move back and forth as in the act of intercourse.

In this polemic account, prayer for the new populist mystics was not merely analogous to an act of intercourse, as it had been for many earlier Kabbalists; it had become scandalously equivalent, to the point of actual orgasm. What had been metaphorical and symbolic in the past had now become literal.

The unrestrained quality of this attack no doubt owed much to the bitter hostility that prevailed between the adherents of this new movement of religious revival and their opponents (known as *mitnaggedim*). With its courts of miracle-working holy men (zaddikim) and their far-flung adherents (Chasidim), Chasidism was perceived as a threat to local rabbinic power. It is not unusual for new religious movements that challenge an existing power structure to arouse sexual anxieties; indeed it often seems as though sexual license necessarily accompanies a revolt against authority.

But were the accusations of our author, and others like him, borne out in practice? Was Chasidism a movement of sexual revolt against the strict standards of the medieval ethical literature of the Kabbala? Did the Chasidic call for joy in the worship of God—popularized in this century by Martin Buber as a "hallowing of the everyday"—include an affirmation of sexual pleasure? Or, conversely, was eighteenth-century Chasidism already gripped by the extreme sexual abstinence that many of its ultra-Orthodox adherents practice today?

Our story turns out to be more complicated than either the opponents or defenders of Chasidism might pretend. Chasidism did have a major impact on the sexual and marital attitudes of Eastern European Jews; yet its impact was far from uniformly licentious. Chasidism's stance on sexuality expressed in an extreme way the dualism of the rabbinic tradition as a whole and the ambivalence of the mystical tradition in particular. On the one hand, we find an affirmation of sexuality, albeit transferred to human encounters with the divine realm. By making God the object of erotic desire, Chasidism was able to construct an affective community of male companions around a charismatic holy man, the zaddik. But this eroticized community had a direct impact on Chasidism's view of human sexuality. In its understanding of relations between men and women, Chasidism radicalized some of the ascetic tendencies in earlier traditions. And in so doing, the Chasidic movement introduced the most extreme anti-erotic values ever to appear in any Jewish texts, values that resemble, in some respects, the renunciations of sexuality preached by Christian monastics. Still more paradoxically, we find on the threshold of modernity one of the most widespread movements of sexual asceticism in Jewish history.

Chasidism must be understood as a response to the crisis of Polish Jewry in the eighteenth century. The world of the Eastern European Jews was shaken to its core by the great massacres of the Ukrainian uprising of 1648–49. Although precise statistics are hard to come by, many tens of thousands of Jews were killed in these massacres, and in the wars that

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David Biale is the director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union. This essay will appear in extended form as a chapter of his forthcoming work, to be published by Basic Books, on constructions of sexuality in Jewish history.

followed over the next two decades. By the eighteenth century, the community had begun to rebuild, but the Polish state continued to weaken. Poland finally succumbed to the machinations of its powerful neighbors, and was partitioned three times over the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Over the same period, Poland's Jewish community steadily lost its own autonomy. In 1764, the Council of the Four Lands, the supracommunal governing body of the Polish Jews, was disbanded. The Jewish population increased rapidly in this period, and this demographic explosion sent many Jews out of the old towns in which they had settled into the countryside. As they migrated away from their former population centers, Poland's Jews also forsook the authority of their established communities, which were under the rule of the Polish nobility.

This dynamic and increasingly disintegrating social order was ripe for religious upheaval. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, a variety of new movements and sects struggled to fill an emerging vacuum in the life of Poland's Jewish community, a vacuum that was both spiritual and political. These movements and sects included the cult of the seventeenth-century messiah, Sabbatai Zevi, an ascetic movement of preachers and miracle-workers; the Lithuanian yeshiva movement; the *musar* teachings of Israel Salant; the Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah); and, finally, Chasidism. In most cases, these movements featured new authority figures who directly challenged or supplanted traditional figures. The zaddikim (literally "righteous") of the Chasidic sects were perceived by both their followers and opponents as threats to existing religious authority, seeking to replace the rabbinic leadership. Yet even the leaders of the Lithuanian yeshivot, a movement that emerged ostensibly as a conservative response to Chasidism, took on many of the charismatic features of the Chasidic zaddikim. The forces of tradition felt compelled to adopt the tactics of their enemies, precisely because authority had become so weakened in the fractured Polish Jewish community of the late eighteenth century.

I believe that many of these movements responded to the needs of adolescent men, often newly married, and that this perspective shaped both the ideologies and theologies behind the many demographic and social upheavals of Poland's Jewish community. I do not mean to suggest that the sexual dilemmas of Jewish adolescents were new to the eighteenth century, but rather that the new religious movements, in search of adherents, framed their teachings and practices around those issues of personal concern to their audience. This process may or may not have been conscious; it may have emerged out of a complex interaction between the movements' theorists and the largely unarticulated desires of their followers. But in the eighteenth century, as opposed to earlier periods in Jewish history, a constellation of sexual ideologies and theologies emerged that appealed to large groups of people. While earlier forms of spiritual innovation were largely confined to elite intellectual movements, renewals of religion now became the social—and sexual—expressions of broad-based, popular movements. In no case is this clearer than in the Chasidic movement, which by the mid-nineteenth century had captured the loyalty of the majority of Jews of Eastern Europe.

Since the early Middle Ages, the Jews of Northern Europe who could afford to had married their sons and daughters off at very early ages, frequently thirteen or fourteen, and sometimes even younger—a practice that may well have been introduced in imitation of European nobility. A celebrated case from Eastern Galicia in the 1760s illustrates the potential traùma of these early marriages. A twelve-year-old boy was married to a girl of the same age; family pressure forced the couple to consummate the marriage sexually. During the act, a member of the household, presumably waiting with bated breath outside the room, knocked on the door, causing the young boy to have a premature ejaculation. The two refused subsequently to approach each other and, shortly before his fourteenth birthday, the boy disappeared.

I do not mean to imply that all adolescent marriages produced unhappy results; on the contrary, there is evidence that many such unions were very successful. Cultural expectations certainly shaped the way that many individuals adapted to their early marriages. Yet, this case would argue that the sexual pressures of early marriage might cause severe anxiety, even leading to personal acts of resistance, such as flight of the young groom. The record is regrettably silent on how the girl responded. When the new movements of the eighteenth century began to provide organized alternatives to the pressures of family life, they, too, had little to offer women.

For newly married young men, however, the new movements seemed to address the anxieties of early marriage not only by offering an escape from the pressures of family life, but also by promulgating ideologies that justified the male retreat. Eliezer Zweifel, a moderate representative of the Haskalah, who wrote one of the first relatively unbiased accounts of Chasidism, observed that most of those who came to the zaddik were newly married young men. Zweifel wrote that these young followers were obsessed with the "sins of youth," (i.e., masturbation and nocturnal emissions); and the zaddik offered them a model of sexual purity and abstinence.

Chasidic sources themselves confirm the relevance of

an ideology of sexual abstinence to an audience of teenagers. Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, for instance, advocated intensive study immediately following marriage, but "study" as it came to be understood in Chasidic practice also meant that adepts must regularly attend the zaddik's court for long periods of time:

> This was in order to break down desire by means of circumcising the heart, setting their moral lives aright and especially uplifting any fallen love through the study of Torah.... After these qualities were in proper place, they returned home to produce offspring, fulfilling this commandment of their Creator just like any other, filled with love of God and with nothing extraneous.

The audience for this text would clearly have been newly married teenagers in turmoil over the sexual demands of marriage. The term "circumcision of the heart," taken from Jeremiah, is especially pointed, for it appears to be a metaphorical play on the medieval philosophical belief that circumcision lessens sexual desire. Nachum's pronouncements also betray great ambivalence about sexuality in marriage. Marriage may be necessary for procreation, but it would appear to be almost as threatening as bachelorhood, since the newly wed husband would experience sexual desire for his wife. Only an immediate cold shower in the house of study—or in the court of the zaddik—would inoculate him against such temptation.

The severe sexual asceticism of these teachings may seem very surprising to modern readers, who are likely to associate Chasidism with the advocacy of joy in spiritual life. Indeed, Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chasidism, opposed the ascetic practices of the wonder-working preachers who wandered the Polish countryside in the middle of the century. According to the Baal Shem Tov: "It is better to serve the Lord in joy, without self-mortification." He also taught that "every mitzvah or act of holiness starts with thoughts of physical pleasure" and "it is proper for a man to have physical desires and out of them he will come to desire the Torah and the worship of God."

Yet the Baal Shem Tov himself argued that physical desires were to serve as the means for their own abrogation. This reasoning led the Chasidim to view even entirely permitted sexual desire as no different from that which is forbidden. Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl records a quotation from the Baal Shem Tov:

> It sometimes happens that a person feels himself to be in a fallen state, overtaken by the negative side of his own inner qualities, especially by improper love in the form of sexual desire. *This may even happen when the desired sexual act is a permitted one.* Such a person should know that heaven desires to uplift him, using his own natural emotions in order to open his heart to the love of God.... He must use that arousal of love itself for the love of God. This may be done even if a person in fact has to fulfill his conjugal duty.... Even then he may perform only for the sake of his Creator, fulfilling this commandment as he would those of zizit [the ritual fringes on garments] or tefillin [phylacteries], making no distinction at all between them, and not seeking to satisfy his lust. (italics mine)

Even permitted sexual acts must be divorced from desire; or, to put it differently, the fantasies and emotions connected with sexual arousal must be transformed into a spiritual love of God. In doing so, Chasidic believers render the act of sex itself no different from the fulfillment of any other commandment.

Adam's sin was not the sin of sexuality, but of experiencing desire and pleasure during the sexual act. The consequence of this sin was a cosmic catastrophe that can only be corrected by the proper sexual practice of the righteous.

The doctrine of using material desire as the basis for achieving spiritual desire for God would seem to affirm the erotic. However, this same doctrine worked toward the negation of sexuality; even if it is permitted, sexual desire exists only in order to be transcended. Thus, although it opposed the ascetic practices of self-mortification popular in eighteenth-century Poland, with respect to sexuality Chasidism generally took an ascetic stance.

This profoundly negative attitude toward sexuality became especially explicit in the teachings of Dov Baer, the Great Maggid of Mezeritch. A disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, the Dov Baer did more than anyone else to institutionalize and disseminate Chasidism; he also did much to promulgate sexual asceticism within the Chasidic movement. According to the Maggid, "during the act of intercourse a man must become nothing," meaning that one should transcend one's materiality and unite with the divine realm of nothingness. In another place, the Maggid gives a Kabbalistic interpretation to the talmudic dictum "a man has a small

organ: if he leaves it hungry, it is satisfied and if he satisfies it, it remains hungry." He concludes that "even during intercourse," one should ignore the physical in favor of the spiritual.

The Maggid's doctrine was further elaborated in the writings of his disciple, Elimelech of Lyzhansk (1717–1787). Commenting on the verse from Genesis 4:1, "And Adam knew his wife Eve and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain," Elimelech offered a radical reading of the word "knew." If the Bible had merely wanted to indicate intercourse, it would have used another term ("to come into"), but the carnal knowledge implied by this word, says Elimelech, is profoundly negative. The appropriate method for engaging in sex is for a man to think only of the upper world and "not to know that he is even with his wife." Adam, however, "knew" that he was with Eve and therefore the product of his intercourse was Cain, the "nest of evil." Adam's sin was not the sin of sexuality, but of experiencing desire and pleasure during the sexual act. The consequence of this sin was a cosmic catastrophe that can only be corrected by the proper sexual practice of the righteous—by which Elimelech means the Chasidic zaddikim.

Nahman of Bratslav (1772-1810), the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, developed an even more radical position on the sexuality of the zaddik. The "true zaddik" (by which Nahman means himself) experiences pain rather than pleasure in the act of intercourse:

> Copulation is difficult for the true zaddik. Not only does he have no desire for it at all, but he experiences real suffering in the act, suffering which is like that which the infant undergoes when he is circumcised. The very same suffering, to an even greater degree, is felt by the zaddik during intercourse.

Circumcision stands for the excision of sexual pleasure, but here it also represents genital pain, and we might well speculate, castration fear. Nahman outlined his sexual teaching shortly after his marriage at the age of thirteen, and we may wonder whether his claim represents the deliberate conquest of desire or, rather, the transformation of his own sexual anxiety into a doctrine.

According to his biographer, Nahman succeeded so well in suppressing sexual passion that he said "'for me, male and female are exactly the same,' which is to say that he had no special thought when he saw a woman." Living several decades after the Maggid and his disciples, Nahman seems to have been keen on asserting that he, the "true zaddik," had achieved the supreme indifference to sexuality that the earlier masters had only preached.

This negative attitude toward sexuality was often bound up with frank expressions of misogyny. Chasidism adopted many of the demonic images of women that ran throughout rabbinic, kabbalistic, and folk traditions. But because sexual pleasure was so problematic, women had to be turned into objects, and their capacity to arouse desire thereby neutralized. Like Menachem Nachum, the Maggid compared sexual relations to the performance of the commandment of putting on tefillin, a metaphor that both chose, perhaps, because it involves the physical attachment of an object to the body that does not cause any erotic or pleasurable feelings.

> One should love one's wife the way in which one loves one's tefillin, for one loves them [as an instrument] for fulfilling the commandments of God. One should not think about her [physically]. This is analogous to one who travels to market day and he needs a horse to make the journey. Should he therefore love the horse?... Similarly, in this world, a man needs a wife in order to perform the work of the Creator for the sake of the world to come and if he should leave aside this work in order to think about her, he is committing a great foolishness.

The instrumental view of women in this text is among the most extreme that one can find in Jewish tradition.

Because sexuality was so threatening, women became guilty by association, and were identified as metaphors for sexual contamination. Consider this text from Elimelech of Lyzhansk: "[a man] must repair ... the sin of his youth [i.e., the sin of masturbation], which is called by the name of the feminine [*nekevut*] and afterwards he will arrive at supernal holiness, which is called by the name of the masculine [Aramaic: *dukhra*]." The polluting sin of masturbation is associated with the feminine, while purity and holiness are associated with the masculine. By extension, sexuality as a whole might be seen as feminine, since the feminine is connected to the material, while the masculine represents transcendence of the material and, therefore, celibacy.

The association between spirituality and male celibacy was borne out by the extraordinary case of Hannah Rokhl, the "Maid of Ludmir" (1815-1895), who for a while acquired the status of a female zaddik. But rather than proving that Chasidism provided a spiritual place for women, as certain sentimental admirers of the Chasidic tradition have claimed, her case suggests exactly the opposite. Hannah Rokhl evidently experienced an upheaval of personal identity as a result of the death of her mother. She broke off her engagement to a boy she had loved since childhood, and she began to act like a man, praying and following commandments that only pertained to men. She attracted a group of followers,

but, like her contemporary, Mendel of Kotzk, she secluded herself and only spoke to them through a closed door. When she was finally persuaded to marry at age 40—that is, to behave like a woman—she lost her following, even though she refused to consummate the marriage and was soon divorced. Her Chasidic followers were drawn to her largely due to the perceived paradox of the soul of a male saint residing in the body of a woman—and the competing male zaddikim who forced her into marriage viewed the same apparent paradox as a threat to their power. Celibacy was a necessary feature of this paradox: once it became clear that Hannah Rokhl really was a woman, she could not be perceived as holy.

It must be emphasized that not all early Chasidic traditions were resolutely ascetic or even misogynistic. For instance, the Baal Shem Tov is said to have treated the second wife of his companion Nahman of Kosov with great honor "since she merited to lie next to so holy a body for some years, she herself is worthy of respect." Here the woman gains spirituality because of her physical relations with her husband, although she cannot do so by herself: his body conveys holiness to her. But this more affirmative view of sexuality within early Chasidism gradually gave way to the ascetic ideals of renunciation and abstinence in subsequent generations of mainstream Chasidic believers.

It was one thing to teach that sexual relations within marriage must be carried on without pleasure; it was quite another to actually achieve it. The unbearable tensions generated by this doctrine pushed some Chasidim toward a different practice: taking vows of abstinence within marriage after fulfilling the commandment to procreate. The legal possibility of taking such vows was, of course, very ancient: it was already discussed in the Mishna. In the talmudic period, many Babylonian rabbis would absent themselves for long periods from their wives, despite earlier legal prohibitions against this practice. The neglect of these earlier prohibitions reflected the severe conflicts within rabbinic culture between the duty to study and marital obligations. The talmudic rabbis took vows of abstinence primarily to pursue the competing goal of study, rather than to avoid the spiritual snare of erotic pleasure. Certain earlier mystics, particularly from the Safed school, were also attracted to abstinence for reasons closer to those of the Chasidim. But the renunciation of sexual relations in the Chasidic sources had a very different resonance, since stories of abstinence circulated not only within a narrow elite, but among a mass movement of believers, few of whom personally adopted such practices. In other words, Chasidism advanced ideals—whether of renunciation of pleasure or of marital abstinence—that conflicted with the actual lives of its adherents; a profound contradiction within the Chasidic movement that undoubtedly produced a widespread sense of anxiety and tension.

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Many of the tales of marital abstinence appear in the Chasidic hagiographic literature and are therefore primarily of didactic rather than historical value. One story of the Baal Shem Tov that appeared in the first edition of the early nineteenth-century hagiography, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov,* relates that the founder of Chasidism abstained from sex with his wife for the last 14 years of his life:

> I heard that when the Baal Shem Tov's wife died, his followers and those of his generation suggested that he remarry, but he replied to them in wonder: "Why do I need a wife? For the last fourteen years I refrained from sleeping with my wife and my son Hersheleh was born by the word."

Evidently scandalized by the Christian overtones of immaculate conception suggested by the last phrase, the editors of the text omitted this story from later editions.

Whether a Chasidic thinker saw sexual pleasure as the springboard for a spiritual ascent or whether he sought to negate all physical and emotional desire, the goal was the same: transcendence of the material and unification

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Growing Up

Donald Friedman

She stood inside the doorway in a black tank suit spattered with small globs of mud. A green garden hose dangled from her right hand. Water flowed gently from the hose, splashing on the slatted boards by her feet. I remembered happily showering sand from my childhood body on just such slats outside a rented beach house.

"You'll have to take off your clothes," she observed gratuitously, smiling, but with evident consternation. I inferred that I was either her first male client or the first in a long time.

For my part, I had anticipated, if not a man, an androgynous or old or at least unattractive female, and she fell utterly short of my expectations. She was no kid, but her breasts bulleted at me as I attempted to return her gaze. They stretched the black fabric, and made highlights appear. Against her hair—wildly unrestrained, brown, a shade off the damp spots of mud—her skin was pale and childishly smooth. But when she shifted I noticed fibers of muscle that twitched athletically in her thighs and arms and where her neck and shoulders joined.

"Here?" I asked. I glanced around the small, panelled reception area, at the doors labeled "Loofa," "Reflexology," "Aromatherapy," and, of course, "Dead Sea Mud," the only open one. As I watched my clothes pile up on the couch I wondered how I would retrieve them in the presence of the next, presumably female, client.

Pulling the door closed behind me I felt the wet boards, cold underfoot. Mercifully her back was turned; I had not felt that naked since I'd been caught pantsless while playing doctor in a coal bin by my friend's mother, forty years earlier.

The plastic-covered table was high and I flexed onto my toes. "Face up or down?" I asked.

"Whichever."

The mud was warm and black, about the consistency of yogurt or tapioca. She scooped handfuls from a bucket and let it run through her fingers as she glopped and spread it on my legs. I remembered discovering my infant son one day, reeking but blissful when he had got into his diaper and besmeared himself. She slathered the black mud over every inch of skin, leaving only my face and a pallid triangle of white flesh precisely where convention demands concealment. This perverse exposure prompted in me—when I stopped counting ceiling tiles long enough to glance down—an accentuated sense of my nudity and inspired a gush of small talk.

"Does the mud really come from the Holy Land?" I asked. I didn't say "Israel," I think, not because she was not Jewish, but because I felt we were dealing with the spiritual rather than the mineral properties of this rejuvenating dirt. She interrupted a stroke to raise the bucket to the light and read the label aloud in confirmation.

"How long do you leave it on?"

"Fifteen minutes, to draw the toxins," she replied and set a timer.

"It must be fun," I ventured, "going to work in a bathing suit."

"It's for you, actually. I usually work without it."

"Oh."

The timer ticked inexorably onward. I recalled a recent visit to the Dead Sea—the baking heat; the chemical-extracting plants on the shore down the road from the resorts; the hotels overrun with Germans, those archvillains of my youth; the blond children digging in the sand, floating amid the salt icebergs; topless fräuleins smacking Kadima balls—and I wondered aloud whether the healing powers of the holy mud were more mystical than chemical.

"The cure is in the touch," she explained, "not the mud." If I could see who she sees: the fragile, the broken-spirited, widows and discarded wives, the old and surgically maimed, those who have not felt another's touch for years.... Did I recall the newborns taken from their mothers in prison, who, otherwise nurtured, died nonetheless? The neurotic monkeys reared with a light-bulb-and-wire mother?

"Only last week I had a woman who removed a prosthesis that replaced her breast, shoulder, and half her side. She tried to prepare me, said she'd understand if I couldn't continue. Fortunately I was behind her, because I almost collapsed. She broke down sobbing when she felt the first tracing of my fingers on her scars."

The bell rang and she helped me slide off the plastic and stand to be hosed off. "Turn," she said, and "Lift your leg," and "How's the temperature?"

"Perfect," I said, raising my arms and rotating in the warm stream.

When I lay back down for a rub and the application of unguents, we speculated about when our own doomed parts would be taken from us—all ultimately unsaveable despite prayer, colonics, meditation, laughter, peach pits, diet, drugs, and exercise. At my request she removed her suit and I covered her in mud. Then she covered me again and we giggled and hosed each other off.

"More," I said.

"I'd love to, but our time is up."

"No, really. I want to. Please." I was amazed at the whine in my voice.

She put an arm around my shoulders, our wet skins sticking where they touched, and I stared pouting at my feet.

"I know," she said, "there just isn't time." □

Donald Friedman is a writer and practices law in New Jersey.

PERSONAL ESSAY

One Man, Two Fathers

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

I don't like to write about my father. During more than 20 years as a writer, I've poured out thousands of words about my mother, but my father, who lived until 1982, has earned only a sentence here or there. I've written extensively about my husband, my children, my colleagues, my friends, but I don't like to write about my father.

I'm afraid to read what I have to say.

I would have to start with the good things: He looked like Clark Gable and dressed like a movie star too. He carried his bills in a gold money clip shaped like a dollar sign. He wore cream-colored trousers and cashmere coats; breastpocket handkerchiefs, white-on-white shirts, initialed gold cuff-links, and a pinky ring with an onyx eye.

"Real snappy," he'd say smoothing the brim of his fedora hat as he passed the hallway mirror. "Real snappy."

As a child, even more than watching my mother dress, I loved to watch my father perform his toilette. I remember the way he tapped a little mound of Pepsodent tooth powder on his palm, dipped his toothbrush into his hand and then brushed methodically, uppers, lowers, left and right. I marveled at the way his straight, light brown hair turned dark as he smoothed it down with pomade, making his hair sleek and close to his head like the men in *The Great Gatsby.*

But the main event was his shaving ritual: I loved watching him slap the straight razor, thwack-thwack, back and forth over the razor strop until the blade glistened, then swirl his bone-handled shaving brush against a cake of soap in a wooden bowl where it foamed like whipped cream. Sometimes he let me lather my face as well. Then both of us "shaved" together in front of the mirror, he with the straight razor making trailblazing paths down his cheeks, and I zigzagging through my soapy beard with an empty chrome safety razor.

"Great job, Bunny," he'd say approvingly, his praise showering me with self-respect as we drizzled ourselves with Mennen aftershave lotion and a light dusting of talc. He had nicknamed me Bunny at birth, but when I was especially adorable he called me "Sugar Pie," or "*Ketzele*" [pussy cat], or "*Kepele.*" To be told I had a good *kepele,* a smart head, was the ultimate compliment; brains were all that mattered and if my father said you had a good head, you might as well be Einstein.

My father knew everything. First of all he was an all-American boy in a generation of greenhorns. Although his parents had barely arrived from Russia, he was born with the century on Valentine's Day, 1900, in New Haven, Connecticut, which made him, as he put it, "a regular Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Second, he had credentials. He graduated from Townsend Harris, a high school for gifted boys, entered City College at 16, whizzed through New York University law school with honors. And now, while all the other fathers were furriers, cloak-and-suiters, or men who "went to business," my Daddy was a lawyer.

Third, he really knew his history, classics, Torah, Talmud, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, carpentry, plumbing, electricity, sailing, fishing, baseball, you name it—so you can just imagine how he could talk. And he didn't just talk, he pronounced, like a sage. He was a great teacher, though far from easygoing. I loved it when he taught me things no one else in the family had mastered, like chess, diving, ping-pong, or my haftarah.

Preparing me for my bat mitzvah was perhaps his finest hour. He was well-equipped for the task, having learned Hebrew at age six from his paternal grandmother ("a most unusual woman," he would say) and studied Talmud with his father, a man so erudite that rabbis came to him with questions. At 10, my father was reading the Torah for his synagogue congregation, reading it with perfect cantillation, the sing-song litany that makes Torah reading unmistakably its own art. While attending college and law school, he taught Hebrew and took four boys per year for bar mitzvah training at $150 each, a princely sum in 1920.

No wonder my father brought so much facility and fervor to my bat mitzvah lessons. He was in his element. He put me through my paces as if he were a rabbi, which he could have been, and as if I were a boy, which I should have been to please him although he never said it. I adored him for treating me like a son and taking me seriously. He drilled and polished my Hebrew recitation until I was the kind of virtuoso performer that synagogue legends were made of back in 1952 when girls, as a rule, did not do that sort of thing. But I did whatever my father valued. More than anything, I wanted his approval because he was my mentor and I saw myself as his intellectual heir. There was no son to make that claim. The legacy was mine if I proved myself worthy of it.

Even when I was very young, my father made me feel important just by talking to me. He spoke didactically but never condescendingly, the way he sometimes addressed my mother and

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Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms., *is the author of seven books, among them* Family Politics *(McGraw Hill, 1983) and* Among Friends *(McGraw Hill, 1986). This article is excerpted from the book* Deborah, Golda and Me, *to be pub-lished in September by Crown Publishers.* *Copyright © 1991 by Letty Cottin Pogrebin.*

aunts. He talked to me as if I could be trusted to get it on first hearing. He was an intelligent man but not a patient one.

I was in heaven when he talked law or Judaism, explaining the convolutions of an ongoing case, the outcome of a lawsuit, the rationale for a particular Jewish ceremony, some intricate point of Mishna or Gemara. I asked him a million questions and he answered them; for smart questions, he was patient.

"Daddy, why is the Mishna called the Oral Law if it's written down?"

"Because the rabbis wanted to prevent any confusion between the Torah which was God's law given to Moses and never to be changed, and subsequent case-law which was meant to be flexible and subject to new insights and interpretations."

"Daddy, why does the Mishna demand twice the penalty for a slap in the face as for a punch in the stomach?"

"Because an insult is twice as destructive as an ordinary injury. A punch in the belly hurts but a blow to the face humiliates and degrades a person."

"Daddy, why does the Talmud say judges can't sentence criminals on the same day as their trial?"

"Because if you're going to condemn someone to death, the least you can do is sleep on your decision."

I knew that if I could get him started explicating a text, he would smoke one Lucky Strike after another, meandering from midrash to midrash long after I was supposed to go to bed. I became adept at engaging him in conversations that both piqued his interest and fed me the information I needed in order to grow up and be like him.

My father's life was so much more exciting than my mother's that I thought it only logical to make him my model and my hero. He seemed to be other people's hero too, judging by how many groups elected him their leader: the local chapters of the United Jewish Appeal, B'nai B'rith, the Zionist Organization of America, State of Israel Bonds, to mention just a few. At the Jamaica Jewish Center, where we went for services every Shabbat and holiday, my father was president of the shul. He did the Torah reading, sat up on the bima, or busied himself in the congregation, giving out kipot and talletot, helping people find their place in the siddur, all the while davening by heart with the loudest voice in the sanctuary.

There were distinct advantages to being small-daughter-of-the-Big-Macher. I could sit in the front row at services, set the table for the Men's Club bagel breakfast, use Jamaica Jewish Center stationery, or help operate the switchboard with all its octopus cords, switches, and plugs. Best of all were the special times when my father took me along wherever he was going.

I've never forgotten when we went to the Jewish War Veterans' convention at Grossinger's Hotel in the Catskills. I was five or six. My father was J.W.V. County Commander, so he sat up on the dais and I sat on his lap. Next to us was a withered old man who seemed lost inside his uniform. My father introduced him as a veteran of the Civil War; he was 98, the most ancient person I had ever met. As the old vet took my hand in his bony grip, he said, "Bunny, you must always remember me because you just shook the hand that shook the hand of Abraham Lincoln."

I don't like to write about my father because I don't want to have to give him credit for that memorable encounter or for the other special events of my childhood. He didn't go out of his way to make them happen; he never went out of his way for anyone. He got credit for so much because he himself seemed so important that just being with him made you feel important.

Somehow I learned how to be fathered by this man. I understood that if I wanted to have him at all I had to enter his world and do things his way. I learned that I was adored when I was smart and cute, but never when I was inconvenient. In my early years, I didn't notice that he wasn't around much, except when my mother cried and begged him to stay home from his endless meetings and accused him of giving more of himself to his organizations than to his wife and child. For me, it was enough to be his well-behaved pet, his mascot, his creation.

I don't like to write about my father because I would have to describe the good memories, as I just have, and he would sound like a better father than he was. And then, I would have to set the record straight. I would have to explain what it took me years to understand: that he gave to me, not so that I would have, but in order to show the world what *he* had to give. Even the bat mitzvah was ultimately for him. Lauded as an extraordinary lay teacher, he claimed the triumph long after it was mine. The patriarch of the Jewish community had shown that he could teach Torah to his Yentl.

I would have to point out that the reason I remember everything my father did with me is because he did so little: He read two books to me at bedtime. One was Charles and Mary Lamb's narrative, *Tales From Shakespeare*. The second was a series of stories by Arthur Train about the adventures of Mr. Tutt, an old-fashioned country lawyer who wore a stovepipe hat and smoked a pipe. I must have been eight or ten at the time.

My father administered a couple of alcohol rubs when I had a fever. I remember once during the night, I woke up sick to my stomach and he helped support my head over the toilet while I vomited. I also remember feeling ashamed that he had to see me that way.

Most of the time when I was sick my mother nursed me back to health. She read me hundreds of stories, not two. Together, she and I made cut-out paper people, and set up my toys among my bed clothes in what Robert Louis Stevenson described as "the pleasant land of counterpane." She brought me presents, cups of tea, bowls of soup, and toast shaped with cookie cutters to look like stars and gingerbread men. Her care blurs into the maternal mists while his few alcohol rubs are as memorable as anointments by a prophet.

He taught me how to swim when I was five. Soon after that, he took me horseback riding and made sure I learned how to post and canter. A year or two later we went to the Bronx Zoo. In a snapshot taken that day I am wearing a leopard-skin coat that my Uncle Herman the furrier made for me. I remember my father joking that I might be mistaken for a baby leopard and claimed by a leopard family as one of their own, and then he would have to climb into the cage and rescue me. Back then, I believed he could.

I remember a summer evening in Coney Island where we rode the bumper cars and ate hot dogs for supper; and a winter outing to some park with a frozen pond where he and I went ice skating for about an hour while my

mother sat on a bench in the snow, watching us. Two or three times, he took me to watch the Brooklyn Dodgers play in Ebbets Field. He was proud that I understood the game, but it was no thanks to him that I did. My baseball mentor was my cousin Danny, who was six years older than I and lived next door. As we listened to the play-by-play on the radio (neither of us had a television in those days) Danny explained the rules of the game and taught me how to record the action on an official scorecard. He let me hang around when he and his friends played stickball in the street—and when the planets were in perfect alignment, I even had a turn at bat. To this day, I have Danny to thank for the excitement I feel when I first enter a baseball stadium. My father didn't give me that.

But Daddy did give me a feeling for Ferris wheels. I'll never forget our night ride at Coney Island. On the first turn of the huge wheel, my stomach dropped, my mouth went dry and I began to cry. I wasn't sure if I was going to faint or die but I became so terrified that I begged him to make the operator stop the motor and let me off. Daddy wouldn't hear of it. Instead, he put his arm around my shoulders and instructed me to chant one phrase over and over again to myself until the ride was over: "Uuuuup and dowwwwwn, round and round; uuuuuup and dowwwnnn, round and round," he intoned in the sing-song voice I knew from his davening. Focusing on his litany of calm, I did as he said and amazed myself by not only taming my fear but enjoying the ride so much that I decided to go around again. Many times since then I've used my father's mantra to cope with anxious situations. But he never again took me to Coney Island.

That's it. Those are my memories of life with father from birth to age fifteen. If I'm lucky the good days add up to a month all together. Maybe I don't like to write about my father because I'm afraid I'd discover that they don't even amount to a month's worth. Then I would have to move on to the rest of the memories, which would reveal this brilliant, dashing man to be another kind of father altogether.

One man, two fathers. Daddy and the Other Father. Maybe I've been afraid that if I were to examine the Other Father more closely I would forever destroy the mythic Daddy, the man I once thought perfect. But as long as I did not write about him at all, I could keep the two images separate, grouse about the man I came to know from age fifteen onward, and keep Bunny's Daddy, the mentor Daddy, the Jewish sage, safe in the bell jar of childhood. The Other Father was another story. I came to know him, and to be disappointed by him, during the year of my mother's illness and then all the years after she was gone. Without her there—to cover for him, to run interference, to neutralize his absences with her luminous presence and his selfishness with her love, without her there as our go-between—I discovered the Other Father for myself.

February 3, 1955. It is an ordinary school night except that my mother is not home; she is in the hospital. After supper, my father takes me into his study, closes the door, and offers me one of his Luckies. He flicks his Zippo lighter for both of us to draw from the flame. I know something terrible is coming. Until now, I had only smoked behind his back. His gesture tells me I am about to be addressed as an adult.

The reason I remember everything my father did with me is because he did so little.

"Your mother has cancer," he says.

There is no preamble. He prides himself on going straight to the point. "The doctors say she has less than six months to live. You'll have to be very helpful and very brave."

That's it. And that matter-of-fact attitude marks his behavior after we bring Mommy home from the hospital to die slowly and painfully in their bedroom. During the whole ordeal, he takes care of things in his no-nonsense, efficient way. There are treatments and medications, doctors to consult, a housekeeper and nurse to hire. No time for reflection. No room for feelings, or ceremony, or despair.

"We all die sometime," he says.

But not my Mommy. Not this wonderful, giving woman who sacrifices for everyone else. Not my mother.

"No use complaining about what we can't help."

But you can help me get through this. Talk to me. Hug me.

"The best thing we can do is to go on with our lives."

And he does.

April 20, 1955. She dies during the night. There are tears in my father's eyes when he awakens me. I won't say he *cries* but they are, to my knowledge, his first tears. He says I can go into their room and kiss my mother goodbye. Then he shifts into his lawyerly mode, making phone calls, giving out assignments, complaining about how much detail work is required by death and dying. Even the modest requirements of a Jewish burial, he says, are too elaborate. "Don't do any of this for me, I just want to be cremated."

(Twenty-seven years later, he is cremated—according to his wishes, and contrary to Jewish law.)

Our week at home sitting *shiva* is interminable for him. He is impatient with the daytime inactivity, the constant flow of visitors and the mountains of food accumulating on the kitchen counter. During the evening memorial service, however, he comes into his own. He leads the prayers.

One night, only nine men show up for the memorial service. A minyan, the quorum required for Jewish communal prayer, calls for ten men. "I know the Hebrew," I cry. "You can count me."

I meant, *I want to count.* I meant, I am your intellectual heir. I meant, Don't count me out just because I am a girl.

"You know it's not allowed," he says, frowning.

I continue to protest: "For my own mother's kaddish I can be counted in the minyan. For God's sake, it's *your* house! It's *your* minyan, Daddy, don't *you* understand?!"

"Not allowed!" says my father.

He calls the synagogue and asks them to send us a tenth man.

May 1955. My father gives away my mother's things. At 15, grieving, I do not think to petition for a hope chest of her clothes, or her paintings, or the books, china, or jewelry that were precious to her. Unmindful that I might

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Breaking the Tyranny of the Market

Robert N. Bellah, Anne Swidler, Richard Madsen, Steven M. Tipton, and William M. Sullivan

During the 1980s, Americans gambled their future on wish rather than sober reflection. Three times in national elections we voted for a simulacrum of the "American Century," for a candidate who projected a sense of American superiority in the world and ethically untroubled affluence at home, willingly suspending disbelief in the possibility of such a restoration. Belief in the free market was revived; the premise of the game of Monopoly was offered with messianic expectations such as have seldom been heard since the nineteenth century. In a situation where further advances in democratic affluence seemed unexpectedly problematic, the market metaphor took on singular power. Disillusionment with the welfare state, combined with the weakening of the languages of biblical religion and civic republicanism that traditionally moderated Lockean individualism, led many to take the market maximizer as the paradigm of the human being.

Although many of his latter-day prophets ignore this, Adam Smith taught that the social benefit of the free market would be realized only in the wider public sphere, with the populace actively debating matters of common concern and expressing its will through the state. Opinion circulating among members of a myriad of voluntary associations would produce a collectively prudent public. The public would expand in social inclusiveness as its ethical level rose, gradually elevating the minds of commercial men toward the standard of judgment summed up in Smith's idea of the "Impartial Spectator," the quintessentially public citizen.

To advance Adam Smith's hopes for a free society growing progressively more cooperative and inclusive, we must make more conscious efforts to redesign markets for public aims. For market forces are rapidly invading every sphere of society—even the family, that traditional bastion of refuge from the "heartless world." Due to its dogmatic belief that individuals develop independently of the web of institutional life, our Lockeanism makes this hard for us to grasp. It thereby blinds us to that great promise of modern civilization: the mutual emergence of individuality and solidarity in a plurality of activities fostered in a genuine public sphere.

The economist Robert Heilbroner, writing of "the implosion of capitalism," has suggested how the market is invading our private lives:

> From this point of view, "economic growth" means the introduction of capitalist social relations into new social terrain.... For example, the enlargement of the proportion of the population engaged in wage labor, dramatically evidenced in the case of women in all capitalist nations, testifies to the implosion of capitalism, just as the imperialist extension of power during the late nineteenth century testified to its explosion. No less important is the "commodification" of life, the extension of commodity production to areas previously outside the ambit of the market. The rise of prepared foods, laundry services, home entertainment, and the pharmaceutical industry are instances of how the accumulation implodes capitalist relations.

As an example of what Heilbroner is talking about, a recent poll showed that the one thing affluent Americans said they could least do without was, not their BMWs or their vacations in Europe, but their microwave ovens. We know that more and more American families never have a meal together. One by one, family members drift into the kitchen and stick something in the microwave. Then it's "So long, I gotta go," as each one departs on his or her separate pursuits. The family meal was once a primary family sacrament, where children learned the terms of civil discourse. What happens to the family when commodification reaches this extent?

Or what happens when parents decide to buy a home in an outlying suburb that will be safer than the city streets and have better schools "for the children," and

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Robert N. Bellah and Anne Swidler are professors of sociology at UC Berkeley. Richard Madsen is a professor of theology and sociology at UC San Diego. Steven M. Tipton is a professor of religion at Emory University. William M. Sullivan is a professor of philosophy at LaSalle College in Philadelphia. *This article is excerpted from* The Good Society *(to be published this fall by Alfred A. Knopf), a continuation of their earlier collaborative study,* Habits of the Heart *(UC Press, 1985).*

then have such long commutes to work that they have very little time with their children? The impingement of the market and the job culture on the family makes it hard for family members to take responsibility for a shared form of life that each person can affirm as his or her own. Developing the capacity to cultivate a shared form of life may make the difference between a personal life rich in connection and meaning and one bereft of lasting satisfaction. Opportunities for taking a responsible part in a shared life sustain the life not only of families but of schools, communities, religious organizations, business enterprises, nations, and even, we are now coming to see, a habitable planetary ecosphere.

Economic ideology that turns human beings into relentless market maximizers undermines commitments to family, to church, to neighborhood, to school, and to the larger national and global societies. In *Habits of the Heart,* we documented what this kind of thinking does to our capacity to sustain relationships in every sphere, private as well as public. But the final irony is that this apparently economic conception of human life turns out to be profoundly destructive to our economy itself. If thinking of ourselves as members of a community made us poorer, there would still be many reasons to advocate it; but the fact is that commitment to a community turns out to be a much stronger basis for an effective economy than the individualist pursuit of self-interest.

We have over the last ten years seen an advance of what is called the commodification of the corporation. Any effective company will be looked at hungrily by people who want to make a profit by buying it, stripping it of its assets, firing managers and employees, and reorganizing it for immediate gain.

The prospect of such takeovers creates an atmosphere in which everyone is suspicious, ready to bail out, looking out for number one, trying to make the next quarterly statement look good at whatever long-term cost so as to advance the prospects of getting another job. By strip-mining our most valuable economic asset—namely, the creative interaction of people who have grown to understand and trust each other—we sink our long-term economic viability.

The principle of immediate interest maximization that cripples our economy weakens every other aspect of our lives together. People in our big cities are worried about the high cost of housing and the problem of clogged transportation arteries. But when every affluent person simply wants to buy the best possible house for his or her family with no concern for the provision of low- and middle-income housing in the community, then the cost of housing rises beyond everyone's means, and even the affluent become indentured servants of their mortgages, while those in need of low-cost housing go homeless. When we think only of our own convenience in driving individual cars to work, then we spend ever more time on the freeway breathing the foul air our cars are polluting; but we could be working for better public transportation that would serve everyone, not just us. Again, one response to problems such as these is the polarization of our society, with the rich creating private enclaves, protected by private guards, where they live removed as far as possible from ecological blight and social breakdown. This feudal or Third World solution is unworthy of the tradition of American democracy, of the spirit of a society based on the belief that all men are created equal.

In a society in which work is simply a job, a means to personal ends, the city becomes an indifferent means to private well-being.

Our individualistic heritage taught us that there is no such thing as the common good but only the sum of individual goods. But in our complex, interdependent world, the sum of individual goods, organized only under the tyranny of the market, often produces a common bad that eventually erodes our personal satisfactions as well.

The Lockean ideal of the autonomous individual was, in the eighteenth century, embedded in a complex moral ecology that included family and church on the one hand and on the other a vigorous public sphere in which economic initiative, it was hoped, grew together with public spirit. Without overlooking its many injustices, we may note that it was still a society that operated on a humanly intelligible scale. Both the economy and the government were sufficiently small-scale as to be understandable to the ordinary citizen. Looking back from our present position, we can see that citizens then were faced with two possibilities, which we may denote as "cultivation" and "exploitation." (The marvelously ambiguous word "development" could apply to both.) The pattern of "cultivation," which many Americans did embrace for a time (and some never entirely abandoned), involved the creation of regional cultures in some degree of harmony with the natural environment, where individuals, families, and local communities could grow in moral and cultural complexity. New England in the early nineteenth

century showed some of the possibilities of such a pattern. Cultivation was not inconsistent with autonomous individualism, when this individualism was supplemented by religious and republican understandings of the common good, and large-scale institutions did not dominate individual decision.

But the temptations of exploitation in so new and so rich a country proved irresistible. The pattern of exploitation was destructive to both the natural environment and the life of the community. It appealed to that aspect of the tradition in which individual accumulation, measured in monetary terms, came loose from other social goods and became an all-consuming concern, undercutting even the devotion to self-cultivation and the family that were originally compatible with the Lockean ideal. But what should have been even more disturbing to true followers of Locke is that this pattern of exploitation led to the development of large economic and governmental structures that grew "over the heads" of the citizens and beyond their control, making a mockery of the most fundamental principle of Lockean political philosophy: government by the consent of the governed. When this was followed not only by plundering the natural resources of the North American continent but by the development of an imperial military state, operating with the secrecy and arbitrary domination that empires always employ, the eighteenth-century notion of a republican polity, answerable to its citizens in the full light of day, was hardly recognizable.

Let us consider a concrete example of the difficulty we face—at once social and environmental—and the changes required. Let us consider the place where the overwhelming majority of Americans live their lives: the regional metropolis. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Miami—these and their many kindred regions are for most of us the locales in which we live out our most basic relations with nature and humankind. How we live in these places profoundly forms the way we imagine our relations with the planet. If we have difficulty knowing how we might have a new relationship with nature and our fellow human beings, perhaps it is in part because of the experience of metropolitan life. It is here that we encounter directly the patterns of cultivation or exploitation.

The American way of life is inseparable from the metropolis, which has long been the source of popular dreams and aspirations. Today and for the foreseeable future most Americans will live and die in such regions, while even those outside them feel the magnetism of metropolitan products, ideas, and lifestyles. Yet most Americans, like the citizens of other industrialized nations, would rather live in smaller settlements, something like an idealized Tocquevillean town.

Why the contradiction between desire and reality, even in democratic societies? Why has the city failed to win the hearts and minds of its lifelong inhabitants? Perhaps because they find so little in it to identify with. Most of its inhabitants are drawn to the city because they see it as the site of economic opportunity. The American city is even more the result of economic forces than comparable urban clusters in other capitalist democracies, such as Britain or Scandinavia, where to a greater degree urban planning agencies buffer society from the impact of purely economic pressures. The boundaries of the American metropolis are economic rather than political, determined by the ability of the region's transportation system to get workers to their jobs and home again within a single working day. The new dispersal of population made possible by federally funded highways has spread population farther from the historic city centers than ever before. In a society in which work is simply a job, a means to personal ends, the city becomes an indifferent means to private well-being.

The modern American metropolis—in its physical arrangements for the human activities of living, working, and meeting and in its commercialized landscape's ecological indifference—renders into brick, steel, and concrete the invisible rule of the market. The sprawling carpet of a metropolitan landscape such as Los Angeles or Houston registers the fluctuations of the market in its random distribution of business zones, shopping malls, and residential enclaves almost always segregated by income and race.

The very randomness of a city's geographic distribution of workplaces, shopping sites, schools, and homes demands from each person considerable exertion of planning and effort just to hold together the basic activities of life. While this has become more and more true for the middle class, it is a far more overwhelming problem for the poor, who so often are forced into housing (if they can find it at all) that is distant from job opportunities or adequate schools. Metropolitan Americans only sometimes live near their kin. Still, they work at neighborliness with those physically (and therefore, usually socioeconomically) close to them, and they work even harder at sustaining far-flung networks of friends. Although city dwellers are able or willing to disregard traditional social patterns (more than half do not live in families, for instance), the lack of social coherence penalizes the young, the elderly, the handicapped, and the socially ungraced. As reluctant metropolitans, they view their larger social environment only instrumentally, and feel little connection to the city beyond their personal networks of association.

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Hands

Sheryl Robbin

He says that he is keeping me company now, when it is almost midnight. We unload the groceries together, emptying the bags, and slowly putting away the canned goods, soaps, diapers, and boxes of tissue paper. After school, the children and I went to the fruit and vegetable store and then the health food store. The produce for tomorrow is put away in the refrigerator, the rice and beans are stored in airtight containers. Whatever I need for tonight is already on the countertops or the breakfast room table.

"You won't be up too late?" my husband asks, taking an open bottle of seltzer from the refrigerator and nibbling on one of the cookies that the children and I baked with a special less-refined sugar purchased at the health food store. Nearby are the challah loaves that my daughter and I mixed, kneaded, and braided. I am letting them rise one more time.

I look around me. In the heavy stock pot the split peas are simmering, the rice is cooking in another pot, and in the Cuisinart are sliced mushrooms still waiting to be sautéed. He takes a sip from his glass and follows my gaze. These cooking methods—preparing different steps of various dishes at the same time—confuse him. He says he never knows which dish I am sautéeing onions for, or what I am planning to do with the carrots I am chopping. He seems to be holding himself back, suppressing some exasperated cry. Instead he says, "These cookies are good." Finally he can restrain himself no longer. "Not everything has to be gourmet."

"I know, but once I get started it's hard to stop."

"Can I help?" he asks, looking at the carrots and the onions.

"No, I'll be all right."

He pauses for a moment, then begins to clear off some loose carrots and the bag of remaining unsliced mushrooms from the kitchen table. He moves on to the cookies, placing them in a plastic container. He goes over to the sink, and sets about washing the cookie sheets and the other pans and spoons from my cooking. I peel and dice the onions. As he works, he resumes telling me stories about his day. I listen, only partially appreciating his gesture: his words grate on me now.

Tomorrow—when the candles are burning and the table is set with china and crystal goblets, when our daughter has arranged the napkins with her unusual designs and our younger son has placed the silver kiddish cups on the table—tomorrow I will want this conversation. Tonight I only want the quiet of the house and the solitude of my work.

He dries his hands on a towel and looks again at the kitchen, which, despite his well-intentioned efforts, is still disordered and becoming messier. He starts in as though to intervene, but senses that there is something here, some obsession on my part that he doesn't understand. "Our company won't know the difference if the meal isn't all fancy."

I shrug my shoulders.

"Don't stay up too late," he says.

"I'll do my best."

We have had this conversation before; the late-night preparations, the frenzy of the house before Shabbat. Sometimes I think this odd planning is because as a child I had never seen anyone cooking for Shabbat meals with a clear time-limit in mind. I know that I should shop earlier, cook earlier, but there are the demands of my job: clients to see for counseling, speakers to arrange for a special lecture series, and emergency calls to answer. And there is this as well: my own reluctance, after being educated on feminism, to give in to this image of myself as a woman in the kitchen.

Now I listen to my husband's sounds in the back of my house and feel the warmth of this solitary time in my kitchen. I move from the sink to the Cuisinart and back to the stove. At the breakfast table I measure the flour and cut the margarine until it resembles small pellets and then add the ice water and mix the dough quickly for the pastry roll. I place it in the refrigerator to set and then transfer the cooked mushrooms to a bowl and begin to sauté the onions, celery, and carrots for the soup. I lift the cover of the stock pot and spread the peas thickening at the bottom of the pot and watch for a moment as slowly each pea dissolves in the mass of the soup.

I hear the water being shut off in the bathroom and the door slowly open. I hesitate, worried that my husband will return to the kitchen. He stops in the hallway. His closet door opens and hangers are scraped along the clothes rod. His steps go back to our room. His is not the visit I want.

Late Thursday night and very early Friday morning the house is quiet. No one calls to ask my husband, the Rabbi, questions about kashrut or arrangements for a kiddish or a luncheon in shul. No one needs to check with me about plans for the women's Rosh Hodesh learning or the weekly women's Gemora *shiur.* Those calls came earlier in the evening, delaying my husband's Thursday night trip to the market. We have spoken already to my

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Sheryl Robbin writes and lives in Los Angeles. Her most recent piece for Tikkun *was "Circumcision: Gainful Pain," coauthored with Daniel Landes (September/October 1990).*

parents and his mother. "Yes, the children are fine. We have company for Shabbat but only for lunch."

I take the dough from the refrigerator. It needs to be at room temperature before I begin rolling it into a long rectangular shape for the mushroom pâté. I glaze the challahs with beaten egg yolks, sprinkle on poppy seeds, and set them in the oven to bake. The house is quiet. My family is sleeping and nothing will disturb the work at hand. I feel at peace among the simmering pots on my stove and the flour strewn across my kitchen table. I have been doing this now for many years.

My grandmother and I are together in my mother's suburban kitchen one Friday morning when my junior high school had scheduled parent-teacher conferences. My grandmother unpacks the flour, yeast, and oil which she brought with her from the city— not trusting my mother to know what is fresh. We stir the yeast into sugared warm water and measure the flour, oil, water, and eggs. We work together mixing and then kneading. Our hands are deep in this tan glutinous mess, which adheres to our fingers and palms. As we work, the stickiness lessens and we transform this viscous mass into a smooth elastic ball ready to rise. We cover the dough, rinse our hands, and clean the kitchen.

After the dough has risen twice, my grandmother punches it down again and takes a small piece of dough, which she throws away without explanation. She pinches off two balls of dough and then hands me one. I watch as her hands, thickened with arthritis but still deft, roll pieces of dough into strands for braiding. She motions me to do likewise. The dough squishes between my fingers. "Always braid under so the dough will rise upward," she tells me. We glaze the loaves with beaten egg yolks and I sprinkle poppy seeds on top and place the loaves in the oven to bake.

My grandmother takes the other food from the refrigerator to prepare for Friday night dinner, along with my mother's baked chicken and rice. As I watch her rinsing vegetables, peeling onions, I have this image of a woman in a small village surrounded by a dense forest. It is still dark outside and a lone lamp burns in her kitchen. Her sleeves are rolled up and her hair pinned tightly against her head. Around her on the countertop are her preliminary preparations: the salted chicken in the basin, the beans soaking in a cauldron, the onions and potatoes needing to be peeled. She pauses for a moment and then gazes outside, intent on her own thoughts. She shivers slightly and then resumes measuring the flour and sourdough yeast for her challahs.

I feel an eternity beyond time as strong as the ageless communion we invoke when engrossed in prayer.

The kitchen buzzer sounds. My grandmother and I open the oven door and draw out the baked loaves. Their tops are golden brown and shiny; the aroma of baked bread fills the kitchen and we feel the heat of the oven on our hands and face. My grandmother looks from the loaves to me and then smiles. She says quietly, as she lifts the loaves and tests the bottom for doneness, "This has been one of the best days of my life."

We set the challahs on the counter to cool and in her hurried speech she tells me everything else she would like to teach me. Our cooking classes continue through my adolescence; mandel bread, gefilte fish, strudel, kreplach, blintzes. Over bowls of flour, eggs, apples, and fish, our hands sticky and wet as we do our work, we share our thoughts and become friends.

I flour the board and roll out the dough until it has stretched into a long oblong and I place the mushroom-walnut mixture along its center. The pastry falls smoothly around the filling and I set the walnut pâté en croute in the oven to bake. At the stove, I add the sautéed vegetables to the thickened peas and wait for the flavors to mingle before I season the soup. I mince the parsley, squeeze a lemon for the rice pilaf. The clock by the refrigerator tells me it is getting late. I will have only a few hours of sleep before I must get up and get the children ready for school and go back to the clinic.

Tonight there are none of the usual signs of time: the children, the phone, urgent news on the radio. The only guideline is my own tiredness and the knowledge that on Friday, I must leave this rarefied solitude. On Friday afternoon, with cooking still to do, a host of last-minute chores will descend. There will be children to bathe, my hair to wash, the kitchen to clean, the lights to check, and the cloth to put on the dining room table with the deadline of sunset approaching—all of the familiar tasks to be gotten through before I gather the children around me, light candles, and welcome Shabbat into our home. I know that not everything needs to be gourmet, that my company will not care if the pilaf has not enough dill or if the pâté is too moist. But if I do not do the work, *she* will not come.

I pull back the curtain and open the window. I see only my neighbor's house and some trees in the backyard. An occasional car drives past on the otherwise silent street and sometimes there is the distant sound of a police car or ambulance. I open my window to her and she traverses the centuries, leaving her kitchen to come into mine. (Or perhaps I travel back in time to enter her small kitchen?) I feel her here with me, this great-grandmother, not the one after whom I am named, but another one, a great-grandmother to us both. She comes into my kitchen and without words we know each other. She cares not about my food processor or mixmaster or that I make dishes—pâtés en croute, or rice pilaf, or almond tortes—with names she never heard of. It is the work that she knows.

I bend by the oven to check the challah loaves. The scent of freshly baked bread fills the room. For this is our offering, the fires in our kitchen with steam and flavors rising upward, it is our *avodah,* the sacrifice that women have offered through the centuries.

I recognize this woman, who walked hurriedly down narrow streets, who bargained in the marketplace, who cared for her children, visited the sick, assisted her husband—who sat close to the front of the woman's section, said her

(Continued on p. 93)

S P E C I A L F O C U S

The PC furor presents a troubling dilemma for the intellectual Left. On the one hand, we are all too aware that overzealous lefty crusaders have sometimes attempted to shove their politics and morality down the throats of everyone around them. Even when we agree with the content *of their positions we find their methods offensive—and counterproductive. On the other hand, the claims that the universities are being taken over by the PC crowd often have less to do with any real changes in university education—which remains ideologically and functionally subservient to the needs of the competitive marketplace—than with the unconscious fear prevalent among white people that they are losing control over this society as a whole. The debate troubles us most when we find the PC forces basing their position on the latest faddish versions of moral relativism—from our perspective, one of the major mistakes of the Left. In future issues of* Tikkun, *we will continue the discussion begun here.*

The Enlightenment Theology of Political Correctness

Josh Ozersky

"Political Correctness" and multiculturalism have generated so much debate that it would be impossible to try to give a truly representative sampling; or so I thought until reading Barbara Ehrenreich's essay in *Time* magazine, "Teach Diversity—with a Smile." The essay was more revealing about the movement than I suspect Ehrenreich was aware. Ehrenreich clearly intended her message to be a plea for reason and moderation. Yet in its paradoxes and its ultimate failure to deal with the real proportions of the issue, it shows reason and moderation to be the dispensable commodities they have become to the multiculturalist cause.

"Something had to replace the threat of communism," Ehrenreich begins. "'Multiculturalism,' as the new menace is known, has been denounced in the media recently as the new McCarthyism, the new fundamentalism, even the new totalitarianism—take your choice." Ehrenreich, after some further sport at the expense of the "tenured conservative scholars" whose "professorial egos" stand against the good news, goes on to explain why multiculturalism is so valuable. Ehrenreich was—"along with so many educated white people of my generation"—a victim of "monoculturalism," which she ridicules for its narrowness: "Graduate students wrote dissertations on what long-dead men [!] had thought.... If there had been high technology in ancient China, kingdoms in black Africa, or women anywhere, at any time, doing anything worth noticing, we did not know it, nor did anyone think to tell us."

So Ehrenreich explicitly endorses multiculturalism. But at the same time she opposes Political Correctness (PC)—the enforcement arm of multiculturalism. She calls PC "a haughty stance," and points out that it alienates people, rather than winning them over. "This might be the reason why, despite the conservative alarms, PC-ness remains a relatively tiny trend." Then, a shift of gears: "Most campuses have more serious and ancient problems: faculties still top-heavy with white males of the monocultural persuasion; fraternities that harass minorities and women; date rape; alcohol abuse; and tuition that excludes all but the upper fringe of the middle class."

Ehrenreich comes back to her amiable, ironic self in the end, advising both sides to "lighten up." "Diversity," she says, "is challenging, but ... ultimately more fun." And yet there the problems sit, elephantine, in the above paragraphs. No one wants to be the stern inquisitor, or at least most people don't. But those "top-heavy" faculties are not going to disband of their own accord. "Monoculturalism" as "conservatives" want to teach it is not simply going to go away, at least not by choice, no matter how harmful it is. Although Ehrenreich dismisses PC as a hostile perversion of multiculturalism, surely she can see its appeal. In fact, PC is not a "tiny" trend at all—everywhere multiculturalism is held up as enlightenment, PC in some form needs to be established, even if it is "with a smile." "Political Correctness," we are often told, is a phrase that was coined with chuckling irony—but it is nonetheless revealing. Multiculturalism,

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Josh Ozersky is a New York media critic.

like all enlightened movements, exists for the sole purpose of displacing the old: "So long as [enlightenment] can develop undisturbed by any outward repression, there is no holding it," wrote Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

Hence the backlash. But might the backlash simply be, as Ehrenreich suggests, only "professorial egos" defending their intellectual turf? There can be no question of the movement's moral credentials. It takes as its basic premises old, venerable, humanitarian ideals: every human being is born with dignity and freedom, and should be accorded them, no matter what, here and now. For the most part, this "empowerment," as multiculturalist advocates call it, takes the form of rooting out harmful and oppressive ideas from college curricula, student newspapers, and campuses generally. Rape jokes, anti-gay rumblings, anti-Black slurs, and white, male, heterosexist reading lists are excoriated and forced into the darkness where they belong. The culture of the academy, its campus life and its received truths, the argument runs, have been created by white, male, heterosexual Westerners, to the deep disadvantage of Blacks, women, homosexuals, and Third-Worlders. Now it is time to "redress the balance" by overthrowing "traditional assumptions" and the "canon" of the white, male, heterosexist humanities. If behavior codes and tenure decisions can help, so much the better. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, after all, was hardly brought off without a power struggle. In any case, whether you agree with the PC picture or not, it would be hard to feel that it represents an insidious or wicked desire. So why has PC been so roundly attacked?

And it has been attacked tirelessly and often unfairly, by almost everybody. On the Left, the *Village Voice* devoted a cover story to "The Cult of Multiculturalism." In the middle, *New York* magazine ran a long cover story, "Are You Politically Correct?" which treated the academy as a kind of horror show of tense ideologues and cracked professors who threatened sanity with their shrill demands. The Right, needless to say, considers adherents of PC to be malevolent subversives to be rooted out as soon as possible: the cover of the conservative cultural journal *Chronicles* donnishly bemoaned the "Vandals in the Academy."

Such responses are marked by an urgency that mirrors the movement's. Vehement attacks on universal standards will generally bring vehement responses. PC, in presuming an insight into the world that has eluded (or been denied by) most of us, has definitely touched a nerve. "Am I Guilty of Racism, Sexism, Classism? Am I Guilty of Ageism, Ableism, Lookism? Am I Logocentric?...": thus ran the long subhead on *New York*'s cover, going on and on like Maoist brainwashing. The people angered by PC clearly feel that something is being imposed on them that extends beyond the demands of good citizenship. And they are right. PC is a religious enlightenment, a church militant, and I think that hostility toward the movement is an appropriate and sane response, according to the standards of this world.

Even leaving aside the various fanatics who have sprouted like toadstools in the shadow of the movement (e.g., conspiracy theorists such as CCNY's Leonard Jeffries, with his distinction between "sun people" and "ice people"), PC has from the first been a higher calling. Most of the proponents of the movement are themselves white middle-class heterosexuals who make no secret of the moral imperative behind their war protest. This penitential quality, especially among the young, has been much neglected in the debate over PC.

The ideal person of PC would be without malice, without judgment, without bias, without formative role models of one or the other sex: in short, without any individual personality at all.

Beyond its worth as expiation, PC sets out to change the world on transcendent moral grounds, and in doing so, its alignment with practical, piecemeal, worldly aims should be understood for what it is. PC is an enlightenment theology: religious in its modes of discourse, and religious in its worldview.

As such, and by definition, the movement is not a program of social engineering. Religious movements, to say the least, are not fond of criticism; and social engineering needs criticism badly—particularly from colleges and universities, where Americans learn to think. PC is religious not because its proponents are moralistic, or devoted, or because it is a crutch to support hollow men at the dead end of secular humanism. PC is a religion because of a sweeping, transcendent doctrine (in its view of subconscious bias and logocentric—sinful—thinking); an otherworldly standard of virtue (in its exacting vision of a life without monocultural "socialization"); a profound distrust of the world (in its passionate embrace of redemptive futures and vanished, legendary African kingdoms); an ordered moral cosmology (in its clear demarcation between oppressor and oppressed). And, most importantly, PC is a religious faith in its claim

to infallibility. This is not to dismiss it; I am perfectly willing to admit the PC view of the world, if it can be proven to me. But proofs are not part of the language of theology, except in a secondary way. As Ehrenreich demonstrates, multiculturalism is (to its proponents) so self-evidently worth-while, and its critics' charges so obviously specious, as to be wholly self- confirming.

Evidence for PC's transcendentalism abounds. Where Marx, say, has often been dismissed as the god of the godless, only the most tendentious of critics can pretend that his reasoning, true or false, is not gathered from the visible world. But Political Correctness, as its name implies, is concerned not with such petty issues as economics or history, but with Truth: long-hidden, which its initiates alone can discern and gather from the edges of the world—slave plantations, the Far East, San Francisco. Even thought, independent of content, can be dismissed by the enlightened as "phallocentric," "logocentric," or otherwise corrupt to its core, by dint of white, male Original Sin.

Nor does a deeper examination bring a hint of a practical social agenda to light. Although the immediate goals of PC—the revision of oppressive norms—seem practical enough, the reasons for the revision are clouded in the mists of lofty antirational doctrines. And disturbingly, these elevated doctrines shield the PC movement from criticism. "Students are unhappy with the thin gruel of rationalism," says Phillip Green, a political science professor at Smith College. "They require a therapeutic curriculum to overcome not straightforward racism but ignorant stereotyping." This therapeutic curriculum will reveal what has been hidden: "Racism and sexism are subtle, and for the most part, subconscious or at least subsurface. It is difficult for us to see and overcome racism and sexism because we are all a product of the problem, i.e., we are all the progeny of a racist and sexist society," reads a draft report on "race and gender enrichment" at Tulane University. Hidden, that is, from the conscious minds of the rest of us. Hard-line multiculturalists see through these smokescreens well enough, although their critical perspective is usually backgrounded to the point of invisibility. Like many a higher doctrine before it, PC has a strong distaste for the active voice. *I* do not see this as a sexist text; it is seen as sexist, by some. Explicitly individual judgments, like fallibility and first principles, are not the business of a



Empowerment or zealotry? PC protesters take their moral judgments to the streets.

successful apostolate. So, actively voiced or not, the PC enlightenment will illumine society's vision. And everything, in the PC creed, is a product of society: art, personhood, "self-esteem," and even the last sanctum of individual life, the bedroom, which PC has dragged into its big picture through its revulsion for "phallocentricity" and "gender roles"—academic neologisms that profess to lay bare the assumptions of the world. With its elaborate vocabulary of conspiracies, and a critical apparatus to "deconstruct" them, PC has made for itself a moral cosmology in which everything has a place. PC is no piecemeal social engineering, like busing or integration, merely attempting to make things better, more equal. It is utopian social engineering, seeking a new world, having finally gotten the number of the old one. ("We are all the progeny of a racist and sexist society.")

It might be argued that PC *is* only piecemeal engineering, a corrective to specific injustices. But the language of the movement betrays its larger intent; even the most common truisms of the movement speak of something higher. "We are all the progeny of a racist and sexist society," but we can be redeemed—by picking apart (deconstructing, revising) all our beliefs, by seeing our error and (it is implied) taking up the cross of multiculturalism. Racism and sexism are oppression; oppression is wrong; to be in the right you must scrutinize yourself anxiously for racism and sexism. Q.E.D. And that means rethinking the whole picture, from infancy onward. I want to stress my admiration for the motive here. PC advocates really seem to want to do the

right thing. And they know the unhappy truth that doing the right thing often means stopping somebody else from doing the wrong thing. Good enough; but I think *they* are doing the wrong thing, and if they lived in the world of fallible, tentative, and reasonable human discourse I would be able to tell them so. But they don't, and I can't. By calling its opponents sinful (as in "racist" or "phallocentric") or erroneous (as in "logocentric"), PC advocates assure their hegemony over the definition of right and wrong. They take the righteously dismissive position of St. Paul, who asks with the rhetorical contempt of the true believer: "Where are the wise? Where are the scribes? Where is the debater of this age?"

PC's proponents use this moral leverage much as they use the passive voice: to buttress their position. The religious stress on sin is further accentuated by the idea that no one (no one male or white, that is) can be free of sexist or racist tendencies. Modern psychology has lent an air of objective credibility to this doctrine, which posits an imaginary being free from all bias and prejudice, to show up real human beings as pathological. We're socialized into limited "values systems." We can't imagine what an individual might be like without them, but we can try. S/he would be the ideal person of PC, without malice, without judgment, without bias, without formative role models of one or the other sex: in short, without any individual personality at all. Against this standard, all, including the advocates of PC themselves, are judged and found wanting. Again, a useful ideal for penitential converts, but one of limited use in social reform.

But social progress is only an incidental goal to a real moral vision. And in fact, since the subjective human viewpoint is inevitably colored by experience and appetites, it simply cannot be given priority in such a system. PC does not really help individual Blacks or women. It is concerned with them as forces in a moral cosmos: their own perspectives as individuals, rather than as cells of Blackness or womanhood or homosexuality, are usually ignored or at least undervalued by the PC. Thus the novel, the record of subjective experience, is, qua experience, often dismissed: "If a work doesn't have a strong political thrust, I don't see how it matters," says Eve Sedgwick, a PC professor of English at Duke. Of course, experience can be read as politics, but my point here is only that the flaws PC posits in people spring unavoidably from their individual selves. As a religious movement, PC wants no truck with individual lives: "Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately privilege the 'individuals' belonging to the largest or dominant group," said an anonymous administrator at Penn.

Therefore, in its widespread negation of individual rights, PC shows itself as a movement with higher things on its mind than even the old pieties of secular humanism. Where the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century meant to lift individual reason above the restraints of religious dogma, our later stage of history, bereft of a coherent body of doctrine to rebel against, posits one. There are no Catholic apologists or Tory statesmen to refute: PC therefore links up the disparate elements of Western tradition, gives them derisive names, and lifts the enlightenment impulse back into the realm of collective religiosity that the original Enlightenment had sought to escape. The battle lines are drawn. PC is an otherworldly, religious creed clearly devoted to proselytizing, often through force. Justice, Truth, Righteousness—these hearty virtues must, the PC movement feels, stay unencumbered by the monkish debate and timorousness of traditional discourse: "Under the guise of defending objectivity and intellectual rigor, which is a lot of mishmash, [critics of multiculturalism] are trying to preserve the cultural and political supremacy of white heterosexual males," accuses Catherine Stimpson, dean of the graduate school at Rutgers.

Identifying PC as a religion doesn't go very far in explaining it, however. This is a strange, vigorous, obdurate movement; to pretend that it sprang out of nothingness is to minimize it. PC arose, in all its sensibility, from the cultural circumstances of the seventies and eighties in America. Anyone with eyes knew those years to be darkening ones; what response could be more natural than an urge toward enlightenment? And, in enlightenment, comfort. PC, the religion, is only slightly more demanding than the competing faiths of its time (the "wildman" encounters of the new men's movement, neo-pagan feminism, Satanism, New Age mysticism, messianic Judaism, etc.). Like these beleaguered faiths, it is essentially a commodity religion, more full of comfort—"ultimately more fun"—than the stern demands that characterize the great faiths. And, like the other commodity religions, it appears to challenge the status quo, but in fact its assumptions, premises, and desires are directly traceable to the suppressed violence and anxiety of the years in which it arose.

First and foremost of PC's influences is therapeutic culture, our great shield against helplessness. Confronted with open sexual warfare, a long and meaningless war in Vietnam, and finally the collapse of administrative credibility in Watergate, Americans in the 1970s turned to therapeutic culture as never before—wanting spiritual wholeness in a fragmented, technologized culture, yet hoping to attain it as a commodity. Best-sellers such as *Looking Out For #1* and *The Joy of Sex* promised—as their successors continue to do—to

ease the troubled hearts of Americans for whom spiritual health had become, like everything else, the domain of technicians and experts. Still, it's better that a guru or psychologist should have all the answers than nobody: that would mean that modern life is as meaningless, its violence as amoral, its anxiety as irrational, as they would seem to be.

With the economic and racial miseries of the eighties, this feeling became reflexive, even as the experts changed. The therapies of the seventies—est, TM, etc.—became passé, orientalisms in an age of "resurg-ent national pride." The gargantuan lies of the Reagan era—that there was plenty of money, that we were "a great nation," that we "felt good about ourselves"—led Americans into an anxious self-scrutiny all the more furtive for the assurances coming from everywhere that things were better than ever before, rather than as bad or worse. And as often as not, these contradictions were solved with commodities. Drug addiction drove a largely Black underclass into frenzies of criminal brutality while VCRs became a big hit among the bourgeoisie—and racism became a swearword. Pornography became a billion-dollar business and AIDS claimed hundreds of thousands while "family values" and "romance" became "in"—and sexism became a sin. What could Americans do but turn to the experts? That televisual role models such as Bill Cosby, Ted Koppel, and David Letterman had replaced Joyce Brothers, Alex Comfort, and the Maharishi as guiding lights did little to calm the original helplessness and panic.

While all this was going on, signs and portents were appearing in the academy. There, where intellectuals were, in their perverse way, cheering on the disillusionment and moral strife that were overtaking American society, something was brewing. The young radicals who had held sit-ins and otherwise opposed the status quo of the 1960s were coming into positions of authority. (Nor have they gone anywhere: "I see my scholarship as an extension of my political activism," says Annette Kolodny, the dean of the humanities faculty at Arizona.) Faculties were glad to have them, if only for the chance to head off further insurgency.

Thus, even before anybody had heard of deconstruction, there was already an established tendency to make peace at all costs, and to give everybody a piece of the pie. Marxist, feminist, and minority critiques of literature were plentiful and beloved within English departments, which, as they were gradually redeveloped into shopping malls of critical theory, wanted to have one of everybody, and thus seem attractive to the next wave of consumers. Deconstruction then entered the picture: a new critical method from France, in which a text (usually literary) could be taken apart—deconstructed—to discover the assumptions and suppressed symbols of its time and place, which could then be safely defenestrated, shedding new light on the suppressed ideological content of the text. This was preaching to the converted; the new academic Left took to deconstruction like bugs to honey, and PC was born.

PC, then, is a hybrid of therapeutic culture and academic Leftism. At first glance, these two movements seem contradictory: one studiously avoids "value judgments" that would impede "healing" and "coping" while the other deliberately reads them into texts. Nonetheless, there is no question that PC is a higher synthesis. Like therapeutic culture, PC claims authority in all matters of human feeling and thought, no matter how private, in order to reassure Americans that, yes, you *can* buy happiness; like academic Leftism, it lends the credibility of position to the self-righteousness and iconoclasm of youth. PC has taken the moral grandioseness of the Left to a new extreme, through the use of deconstruction as a sort of ultimate weapon for enlightenment; therapeutic culture gave the new moral creed its healing mission. What both parents had in common was their readiness to offer easy answers, and if one side eschewed morality and the other imposed its own, both at least offered quick fixes in troubled times.

And an answer, on the grandest scale, is what theology is all about. It is the discourse on the first cause, "the queen of sciences" to the medieval scholastics; only theology offers more than a secondhand explanation of the world. PC advocates are not stupid and they are not, except for a handful, particularly wicked. They want goodness, and they want meaning, and they see how it can be found—the answer becomes a light in their eyes, and they are freed from the self-limiting modes of discourse that characterize people with a humbler grasp on the dynamics of the world. Thus freed, PC has no reason to "teach diversity with a smile." Ad hominem attacks, tribunals pronouncing judgments on private remarks, de facto book burnings, and similar shows of kindly totalitarianism thus become justified and necessary.

It is not, therefore, the questions PC asks that make it dangerous, as its proponents often boast. Although they couch their claims in the language of earthly, fallible discourse ("We are questioning the usefulness of traditional reading lists"), they know in their hearts that they have the answers. What makes them dangerous are those answers, so irrefutable, so closed to real criticism, so selfless and self-confirming, and so penetrating. Answers of such finality are possible only for God; in His absence, they are merely coercive. □

The Self Besieged: American Identity on Campus and in the Gulf

Evan Carton

Between December 24, 1990 and April 1, 1991, Saddam Hussein and the crisis in the Persian Gulf pumped most of the lifeblood that circulated through America's major organs of news and opinion. In this short period, all of the phases of the Gulf War unfolded: from administrative brinkmanship and national debate, through the air campaign, the ground campaign, the protracted drama over terms of disengagement and surrender, the euphoric homecomings, and the chaotic, brutal, disenchanting (and continuing) aftermath. During these same ninety-nine days, however, four prominent national magazines—*Newsweek,* the *New Republic,* the *Atlantic,* and *Time*—each launched a blistering, patriotic attack not on "the Butcher of Baghdad" but on a domestic scourge, seemingly far afield. Three of these influential publications devoted their entire covers—the fourth ran an alarming headline over its nameplate—to the home front terror that merited, all told, sixty-one pages of testimony, diagnosis, and indignation: the scourge of multiculturalism or of "political correctness" in American universities.

These attacks on multiculturalism have in mind a composite enemy, part affirmative action, part revision of the literary canon and humanities curriculum, part ostensible left-wing coercion in the academy, and part—in the *Atlantic*'s resonant phrase—"domestic liberation movements." Thus, as employed by its assailants, "multiculturalism," or the more dismissive "PC," is a heading under which several efforts at intellectual and social reform are lumped, and vilified, together. The strategy of the attacks on multiculturalism is not to directly engage the distinct issues raised by professors whose progressive or radical political commitments openly inform their teaching, by students who demand a curriculum and a university environment that address differences in ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, or by college administrators who accept and act on the proposition that racism is principally a matter of institutionalized practices rather than of personal attitudes. Instead their strategy is to conflate all such activism and to reduce it to a generalized principle of subversion that may be rhetorically saturation-bombed.

That the assault on this many-faced enemy coincides with the war in the Gulf is, I'd like to claim, no accident. This is not to say that George Bush or Norman Schwarzkopf orchestrated the journalistic as well as the military campaign. But it is to contend that the war on multiculturalism and the war in the Gulf both express the same complex of dominant—yet increasingly unsettled—American assumptions about the nature of personal and national identity. While they obviously differ in innumerable respects, Operation Desert Storm and, if you will, Operation Campus Storm both respond to internal challenges to the traditional character of the American union and the ostensible unity of the American self in the 1990s. Both enact and reflect what I call an American "politics of selfhood," a collective ideology of individualism that inclines America to an abstract and nationalized image of the autonomous self and to a personified and desocialized image of the nation.

If, as I believe, such a politics links the intellectual and imaginative lives of American citizens to the global actions of the U.S. government, then Operation Campus Storm and Operation Desert Storm may be usefully compared. Specifically, an examination of the conceptual framework, the emotional undercurrents, and the rhetorical weapons for the assault on "The Cult of Multiculturalism," "The Victims' Revolution," "Thought Police," or "The P.C. Front" (as titles in the *New Republic, Newsweek,* the *Atlantic,* and *Time,* respectively, described their targets) should shed an unaccustomed light not only on the cultural construction of the Gulf War at home but on the cultural *production* of some of that war's strategic and material elements. Understanding this assault can help us to grasp the war's own cultural logic: the personification of Iraq in the person of "Saddam"; the justification of massive bombing in and around Iraqi population centers; the almost perverse American commitment to Iraqi nationhood at the expense of the lives of thousands of Kurds, Shiites, and

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Evan Carton teaches American literature at the University of Texas at Austin, and is currently finishing a book called The Politics of Selfhood: Literary and Social Practice in Modern America.

other opponents of the central government after its defeat in Kuwait.

Prosecutors of Operation Campus Storm and Operation Desert Storm point to the same historical context in justifying their respective campaigns. Like the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, multicultural insurgency on campus is portrayed as a threat to the triumph of America's new world order. "Why," asks *Time,* "are Western cultural and social values so out of favor in the classroom when so much of the rest of the world has moved, during the past couple of years, to embrace them?" Indeed, *Newsweek* observes, paraphrasing with evident approval the president of the reactionary National Association of Scholars, Stephen Balch, "Western civilization has earned its place at the center of the university curriculum, not by the accident that most university professors have been white males, but by its self-evident virtue. It has given rise to the single most compelling idea in human history, individual liberty, which as it happens is just now sweeping the entire world." This "mirror-image reversal of basic assumptions held by the nation's majority," in *Time*'s phrase, seems so perverse as to warrant Dinesh D'Souza's solemn pronouncement, in the *Atlantic,* that "it is the pursuit of truth itself that the modern critics spurn."

As Hussein's Iraq assumed the symbolic position vacated by what Ronald Reagan not long ago called "the Evil Empire," so multiculturalism is implicitly associated here with a discredited communist threat. *Newsweek*'s cover may have dubbed PC "the New McCarthyism," but it is the attacks upon it that often smack of red-baiting. *Time*'s title, "The P.C. Front" alludes to "Popular Front" coalitions against fascism or military dictatorship that, we're to understand, have been mere fronts for communist takeover. For its part, the *New Republic* righteously intones: "Which texts, in what language, from which society, do not come to us from the midst of terrible relations of power? Certainly not the texts of the East." And a *Newsweek* article that accuses unnamed PC strategists of advocating a period of tyranny in order to bring about a multicultural utopia concludes: "Does that sound familiar? It's the dictatorship of the proletariat, to be followed by the withering away of the state. These should be interesting years."

All this smug equating of multiculturalism with a neutralized national adversary and a vanquished political ideology is curiously inconsistent with the extent and the intensity of Operation Campus Storm and with the note of fear, verging on hysteria, that it repeatedly sounds. If not only the power but also the "self-evident virtue" of America and the philosophy of liberal individualism have been established in the world, why do these articles take the nation and the self to be so vulnerable to multicultural subversion? One answer suggested by the apocalyptic tone of the assailants is that, for all the talk about a new era of American power and about the ethos of personal autonomy sweeping the world, Americans currently experience both nationhood and selfhood as fragile and besieged. During the Gulf War, such anxiety haunted the private citizens who, despite the absence of real danger, avoided domestic air travel and bought out the stocks of gas masks at Army-Navy surplus stores, as though the Iraqi Republican Guard had been bunkered under Main Street. This apprehension also surfaced in attacks on protestors and Arab Americans, and in the nationalistic war fever that thoroughly and almost instantaneously supplanted public division and debate once our bombs began to fall.

Operation Campus Storm betrays a dangerous abyss that lies just beneath the surface of mainstream American social thought.

In the American media, multiculturalism, like the Arab revolutionary, has come to symbolize a lurking threat to American individuals and to the idea of individual freedom. Fred Siegel, the *New Republic*'s point man on the culture wars, is clearly appalled at the thought that "productions of the intellect and the imagination represent not the freedom of the writers and the artists who produced them but the relations of power that obtained in the writers' and the artists' time, and that every society generates ideological biases that none of its members can escape." The cultural constitution of personal expression and the silent workings of ideological conditioning—in short, the primacy of social relations over individual autonomy—unsettle the shock troops of Operation Campus Storm in much the same way that the Gulf War stirred up in many Americans a fear that their private lives and apparent freedom of movement were under invasion or threat of invasion by unseen and inescapable forces. Indeed, the demonized figure of a "cult" of multiculturalism, "incit[ing] tension between individual uniqueness and group identity," even subordinating the former to the latter while rejecting "the traditional liberal commitment to a 'truth' that transcends parochialisms," bears a good deal of resemblance to our popular conception of Islam.

That multiculturalism should be charged with *inciting* tension between the individual and the collective is noteworthy. One might have thought that such tension

would be constitutive of citizenship in any democratic state. But the assailants of multiculturalism subscribe to a myth of America in which individuality, rather than existing in tension with collective identity, is its very basis. This doctrine leads writers such as *Time*'s William A. Henry III to offer sweeping characterizations of American tradition, and specifically the American educational tradition, as pluralist *and* coherent, iconoclastic *and* uniform, without the slightest sense of contradiction. Within the space of four sentences, Henry pronounces on the one hand that "for most of American history, the educational system has reflected and reinforced bedrock beliefs of the larger society," and, on the other, that "American universities and colleges have always been centers for the critical examination of Western assumptions and beliefs." Indeed, the rhetoric of Operation Campus Storm is typified by this double insistence: on an abstract Americanness; and on an abstract "individual uniqueness." This double identity subsumes material differences among Americans in the name of "transcending parochialism," while simultaneously denying particular material commonalities among Americans, except for the commonality of national identity itself, which is not imagined to compromise uniqueness. Thus, the same people who support the National Association of Scholars, whose homogenizing vision of America in effect preserves a white male canon ("an American student should know American history before he or she turns to Afro-American history or Asian-American history," explains one NAS leader in *Newsweek*), also express outrage that the title of a course on canonical American writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner should discount their differences by classifying them as "White Male Writers."

Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities,* notes the seemingly paradoxical correspondence between the rise of individualism and the establishment of modern nationalism. A sense of national identity arises, Anderson suggests, among people largely unknown to one another who move and function interchangeably within boundaries that are secured and given meaning by a central administrative structure. As an *imagined* community, the nation depends upon—and compensates for—the attenuation of more immediate and tangible communities defined by locality, ethnicity, social station, sect, and speech. In eighteenth-century America, the spread of print journalism played a critical role in weakening these grounds of difference and bringing about the "internal interchangeability of men and documents" that national unification demanded. In our own time the experience of tens of millions of Americans sitting in their separate homes, at one with each other and with the U.S. air campaign in the Gulf through the ghostly power of electronic journalism and satellite transmission, represents perhaps the purest imagined community ever achieved—the most complete erasure of complicating social difference through the convergence of private selfhood and national identity.

The "Western civilization" that Operation Campus Storm aims to rescue is just such an imagined community writ large, one suited to a multinational (as opposed to multicultural) world order. There is something bizarre about the refrain that echoes through the *Time, Newsweek, Atlantic,* and *New Republic* articles: Courses in Western civilization, Western culture, or the Western tradition are being sabotaged by the intruding experiences, ideas, and writings of women, African Americans, gays, Marxists, and colonized peoples. For, of course, Western civilization includes these groups, Western culture has constituted them, or, in the case of colonized peoples, the history of the West has powerfully affected their lives. But to acknowledge this is to admit a material challenge to the abstract idea, the imagined entity, that is "Western civilization," and to cease to conceive of its leading figures as freestanding monuments of unaging intellect. Rational thought, by this reasoning, is not tapped at a universal spring and powerful expression is not an emanation of unconditioned genius. Instead, each proceeds in various fashions and to various ends in response to different human situations, including that of oppression.

Ironically, the defense of Western civilization against multiculturalism is predicated upon a false account of that civilization's history and of its representation in the university. For the "venerable" and "apolitical" core curriculum in Western culture is, in fact, neither. Courses such as Columbia University's widely imitated "Contemporary Civilization" were, at the earliest, World War I inventions. Indeed, their prototype, as Gerald Graff has noted, was a class called "War Issues" that was sponsored by the U.S. War Department. And the expressly ideological task of these was to reinforce the idea of a Western cultural heritage, traduced by Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany and by Bolshevism, and dependent upon American stewardship. The urgency of that task was increased by the waves of recent immigrants, an internal source of political instability until they could be culturally assimilated.

The British historian Eric Hobsbawm has written that "the progress of schools and universities measures that of nationalism, just as schools and universities became its most conscious champions." This observation suggests one reason for the powerful sense of betrayal that

one finds in the attacks on campus multiculturalism. In these articles, the ideal university is clearly conceived not just as a champion of nationalism but as a model of the nation and as an institutional embodiment of the unfettered, spiritualized American self. The university is "worthy of close attention," writes D'Souza in the *Atlantic,* because "universities are facing the same questions as the rest of the country" and their answers will shape America's future. At the same time, the *New Republic* opines that "universities . . . should strive for an identity in contradistinction to the world at large." Waxing bathetic, its editors continue:

> The university that we defend is a truly subversive institution. It is devoted to the pursuit of inquiry with no end in sight, and with no justification except its own curiosity. It is dedicated to the life of the mind as a radically undetermined adventure, a ship on an endless and bottomless sea, open to all breezes (even multiculturalist breezes), deft in all currents, with no particular destination, and no harbor in sight.

These two images of the university are completely compatible and are shared by the writers for all four magazines. For the America that the *Atlantic*'s university exemplifies is precisely *not* the America of material and historical and human reality, not the America that has always been multiracial and multicultural. It is the America of myth, God's Country, Nature's Nation, John Winthrop's City upon a Hill, which from the beginning imagined itself to possess "an identity in contradistinction to the world at large." The *New Republic*'s university mimics the romantic frontier hero of American legend and canonical literature. It is Huck Finn lighting out for the territory, Thoreau on Walden Pond, Whitman sauntering along the open road. But it is also an expression of the same myth of America, the ship of state that unlike all others is open to every breeze yet caught in no current, that sails no ideological course, and that pursues no ends but truth and liberty.

To represent the university as the site of "radically undetermined adventure" is to obscure its institutional history and social functions and to deny the quite determinate political context of the present moment, a context that lends the appeal to undetermined intellectual adventure its attraction and polemical force. In fact the quite distinct goal of the *New Republic* passage is not to defend "a truly subversive institution" but to circumscribe for the university a sphere utterly removed from social and material reality (hence to exempt it from the possibility of either political subversion or political complicity) and to pretend that it has always occupied that sphere. Perhaps what most scandalizes the counterinsurgents of Operation Campus Storm is the contention of the academic Left that knowledge and the organization of knowledge are products and instruments of power and that, consequently, institutions of knowledge are inevitable participants in relations of power. Again and again, in a variety of ways, the counterinsurgents deny the connection between knowledge and power, claiming—much more disingenuously than the forthright agitator for Afro-American or women's studies—to serve no cause but that of knowledge itself. This



PC-ed off? This satirical item by Gary Rosenblatt first appeared in the Baltimore Jewish Times. *Although we enjoyed the notoriety and appreciated the humor, it stimulated a lively office debate. Some found it funny; some found it offensively sexist. Is it obsessively "politically correct" to question this sort of humor? We'd like to hear your reactions.*

is the denial that permits *Newsweek* its stunning social and historical obliviousness when it writes of "the *accident* that most university professors have been white males" (italics mine). And this is the denial in light of which *Time*'s claim—that the university at once reinforces and challenges the society's bedrock beliefs—can seem sensible: if the university's "critical examination of Western assumptions and beliefs" is purely a theoretical matter—or what the *New Republic* editors call "a worthwhile (though limited) intellectual exercise"—then the society's bedrock beliefs are only reinforced by an apparent challenge that turns out to be inconsequential in practice.

To abstract any academic or political agenda from the actual human minds, bodies, and communities that it affects is to open a deadening, and perhaps deadly, gulf between word and behavior.

To insist that knowledge is divorced from relations of power obviates the need to recognize the material conditions in the universities that disseminate knowledge and in the lives of those who attend them. Accordingly, the assault on multiculturalism ignores these conditions whenever it is convenient. What some, appropriately I believe, call "the victims' revolution," Operation Campus Storm pillories as a veritable juggernaut, a takeover of the academy by minorities, leftist professors, and PC courses. The truth, though, is that universities have undergone no radical change, and that administrative power still resides elsewhere. The *New Republic*'s ugly warnings that "the impact of affirmative action upon the tenor of even the simplest class discussion is profound" and that "whites ... are gradually being cowed into a sullen silence" brazenly falsify the continuing underrepresentation of Blacks in American institutions of higher learning, many of which are actually suffering from declining Black enrollment. And the magazine's depiction of these putative developments as spearheading "an orthodoxy that prefers those texts that are racially pure, and advances those students whose race—and race alone—entitles them to study them" is a ludicrous characterization of the contemporary American academy. It is, though, a more accurate depiction of an earlier academy, in which whites felt freer to speak because people of other races, having no equal protection under the law, were simply not present.

Free speech, of which multiculturalism ostensibly deprives the white majority, is the great shibboleth of Operation Campus Storm. What American could appear to oppose it and remain credible? The *New Republic*'s blitzkrieg includes five "reports," one each from the campuses of Wisconsin, Yale, Berkeley, Oberlin, and CCNY. On each campus it appears that free speech on matters of race, gender, and sexual orientation is being systematically curtailed in the name of "community" or "civil discourse" or "equal educational opportunity." One account, entitled "Only Correct," describes the University of Wisconsin's effort to introduce into its code of student conduct a prohibition on hate speech and creates an intimidating or demeaning environment and blithely concludes: "It's hard to imagine how students will ever learn to think freely without speaking freely."

Putting aside the question of whether fraternity "slave auctions" that sell the services of dancing pledges in blackface or "Burn a Fag in Effigy" rallies promote intellectual growth, it can be argued that what is being protected here by opponents of multiculturalism is not the principle of free speech but the fiction that speech—like knowledge—is unimplicated in the exercise and exempt from the structures of social power. Operation Campus Storm most notably and insidiously advances this fiction in its categorical divorce of discriminatory speech from discriminatory effect. Slurs against Blacks, women, or gays are just as unfortunate as slurs against whites, men, or heterosexuals, it liberally affirms, but only an evenhanded toleration of all speech, however offensive, ensures freedom and equal opportunity of expression for everyone. Yet racist and sexist speech against Blacks and women *does* differ from deprecations of whites and men, because the former has practical consequence and carries the history of such consequence, whereas the latter generally does not.

The opponents of multiculturalism, however, deny speech and thought any legitimate connection to action. "Imagine institutions," gasps *Time,* "that insist they absolutely defend free speech but punish the airing of distasteful views by labelling them unacceptable 'behavior' instead of words." The *New Republic* similarly disdains the notion that college courses might consider "go[ing] beyond mere study to the actual defeat of the racial and sexual structure of society at large." And, most revealingly, *Time* again, in the lead paragraph of its "Upside Down in the Groves of Academe," defies us to "imagine places where it is considered ... sexist to order Domino's pizza because the chain's chairman donates money to an anti-abortion group."

Time's denial of any connection between the general proposition that sexism is bad and the particular act of

withholding funds from those who would diminish women's control over their bodies epitomizes Operation Campus Storm's repeated claim that speech may be isolated from its material and social surroundings. This claim is exemplified as well in the *Atlantic*'s approving account of a Princeton Dante scholar who fought the lonely, losing battle against the creation of a women's studies program. When the proposed program was ratified, the fact that female faculty members embraced and kissed each other "did nothing to diminish his concern that the debate was more about feelings than ideas, revealing an ideological rather than an academic agenda." Feelings and the physical and social *action* of embracing, as D'Souza sees it, indicate an ideological agenda; ideas, which properly underlie an "academic agenda," do not. To accept these distinctions, however, is to reinforce the image of the university, and of the nation that it reflects, as a bodiless abstraction. When embodied difference, political struggle, and the historicity of knowledge are left off the academic agenda, what remains is a university that is at once a figure of the unfettered self and the indivisible nation, diverse and united, *pluribus* and *unum,* the city upon a hill.

We have not strayed so far from the Gulf War as it would appear. Indisputably, the war was prosecuted in response to political, economic, and military considerations beyond the scope of the battle over multiculturalism. But the cultural force of what I call the Campus Storm politics of selfhood was also in evidence in the theater of operations strategically identified as "the desert." The same speech and thinking that depopulates the university by conceiving it in terms of the paired mythic figures of unfettered self and indivisible nation proved useful in two of the stories we Americans told ourselves about Iraq.

It was useful, first, in justifying the predetermined military strategy of Operation Desert Storm, which was precisely not to storm the desert. Because the American public did not find the reasons for going to war sufficiently compelling to warrant the substantial loss of American life, no direct and limited assault on Iraqi troops in Kuwait and adjoining positions in Iraq was politically feasible. The question instead became, would the stakes of the conflict seem high enough to justify the human costs of the alternative: a massive air assault on targets in and around Iraqi population centers that would kill thousands of men, women, and children, terrorize hundreds of thousands, and perhaps destroy not a desert but the cities, economies, services, and environments upon which the lives of millions depended? Whatever one's answer to this question in the wake of the war's actual achievements and damage (to the extent that either is known), before and during the war it was almost impossible to ask publicly.

A key reason for this, I believe, was that Iraq had been effectively depopulated in the American imagination, that it had been abstracted and collapsed into and personified by the singular "Saddam." A figure unknown to most Americans before August, Iraq's dictator quickly assumed an aura of evil ubiquity and of nearly transcendent power in the U.S. media. This aura was enhanced and this evil further personalized by the habitual solitary usage of his first name (putatively to avoid confusion with Jordan's King Hussein), a practice not common in referring to Arab leaders, even those with connec-tions to terrorist activities, such as Arafat, Assad, and Qaddafi. So completely did "Saddam" replace Iraq that it was difficult to remember (if we had ever known) that Iraq was a country with a heterogeneous population that largely opposed Hussein but was powerless to remove him, a population that suffered his brutality far more than it sanctioned his aggression. Thus, it seemed almost natural that network military experts should speak of American bombing as having material and psychological effects not on Iraq, but on "him." Or, by extension, that General Richard Neal should respond in a press briefing to a question about the heavy damage to Basra by explaining, "Basra is a military city." In large measure, Peter Arnett's CNN reports from Baghdad during the air campaign aroused such furor simply because they pierced the fiction of an abstract, depopulated, "military" Iraq.

After our easy victory in Kuwait, it was not Saddam's unfettered self but, ironically, the notion of the indivisible Iraqi nation that served as justification for the sacrifice of Iraqi civilians. Again, the initial willingness of the Bush administration to accept the slaughter and exile of Kurds and Shiites as the price of maintaining Iraq's national identity can be viewed as a matter of practical political and military strategy. Yet it is far from apparent that only the present governmental structure of Iraq is compatible with U.S. interests in the region. Why did we find the possibility of the country's reorganization as some sort of federated union, an officially multicultural state in which power was shared, so insupportable? Might not the same doctrine of "collective security" invoked in the matter of Kuwait and heralded as the centerpiece of the new world order have protected the peoples of Iraq until such reorganization was complete? This application of collective security was rejected out of hand not simply because of American realpolitik but also because America was unable to envision security except in terms of the imagined community of nationhood. That inability, rooted in our own cultural experience, persisted even when the nation in question was deeply

and historically factionalized and its immediate unification depended upon allowing a man likened, just weeks before, to Hitler to regroup and consolidate his power.

There is a striking parallel between the fear of regional destabilization that the uprising of Iraq's different subordinated groups prompted and the fear of national destabilization that multiculturalist claims in America produced. When the *Atlantic* recently warned of "domestic liberation movements" and *Newsweek* wrote of those "who agonize over whether anything that is common to the entire culture remains," they were not agonizing about the Middle East or postwar Iraq, but about America under multiculturalism. The site of the "ill-mannered, tribal politics based on ever narrower conceptions of collective identity" that so disturbed the *New Republic* was not Iraq but Oberlin College. And, mopping up in the April 22 issue of *Newsweek,* George F. Will explicitly confirmed the link between the threat of multiculturalism and the threat in the Gulf when he wrote of the "low visibility, high-intensity war" on "the politicization of higher education" conducted by Lynne Cheney, chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. "Lynne Cheney," Will explained,

> is secretary of domestic defense. The foreign adversaries her husband, Dick, must keep at bay are less dangerous, in the long run, than the domestic forces with which she must deal. Those forces are fighting against the conservation of the common culture that is the nation's social cement.

It is not only a shared rhetoric or the Cheney marriage that connects America's domestic to its foreign "defense." The very structure of the articles of Operation Campus Storm mirrors U.S. Gulf policy; indeed, they might have served as models for the U.S. government's early treatment of the plight of brutalized and dispossessed Iraqis in the war's aftermath. Almost invariably, these articles, like the official American pronouncements on the postwar carnage in Iraq, begin by sympathizing with victims of prejudice or oppression, and even by professing outrage at their victimization, only to subordinate, and ultimately to forget, these responses in favor of a larger concern for the coherence and the survival of the nation, or culture, or university. In the bodies of these articles, most of the direct acknowledgements of the ongoing problems that minorities face are literally contained between dashes or parentheses. It is almost as if anything more than a formal, parenthetical recognition of division and injustice within the collectivity is incompatible with, even actively antagonistic to, the collectivity's continued existence. This is the implication of the *New Republic*'s campus reports and the distinct message of D'Souza's long *Atlantic* essay, "Illiberal Education." In his first paragraph, D'Souza notes "a proliferation of undergraduate bigotry"exemplified by posters plastered around the University of Michigan campus that read, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste—especially on a nigger," but it goes on not only to dismiss this bigotry but to find the real evil to lie in efforts to extirpate it and in those who vigorously (if not always temperately or successfully or even consistently) pursue such efforts. By the last sentence, with its ringing denunciation of "the lurid bigotry, intolerance, and balkanization of campus life," it is hard to recall that words like "bigotry" and "intolerance" were ever associated in this article or in America with racism: now they are firmly and wholly properties of multiculturalism.

A contemporary term, more resonant and complex than "balkanization," that was frequently invoked to describe U.S. fears about the consequences of successful Kurdish and Shiite revolts in Iraq is "Lebanonization." Politically, "Lebanonization" refers to the disintegration of a working central government in Lebanon and the informal and violently contested division of that country's territory among rival ethnic and religious groups, occupying foreign armies (Israel, Syria, the PLO), and agents of other states. It aptly characterizes as well the specter that haunts the prose of Operation Campus Storm. Multiculturalism to its opponents represents a Lebanonization of knowledge and of the self, where "Lebanonization" signifies both the breakdown of meaning, order, and unity, and a state of occupation or domination by external powers. The term offers a useful figure, then, for the contradictory insistence of anti-multiculturalist rhetoric that the philosophy of multiculturalism is at once totalitarian and radically antinomian, that it restricts meaning to a single rigid orthodoxy and relativizes meaning out of existence. This contradiction is, in fact, not a sign of the intellectual or moral bankruptcy of multiculturalism but a function of the philosophy of Operation Campus Storm and the ultimately impoverished concepts of selfhood and meaning upon which it rests.

In plucking America from the edge of the abyss of multiculturalism, Operation Campus Storm betrays a more dangerous abyss that lies just beneath the surface of mainstream American social thought, and a more profound emptiness that is concealed by the apparent completeness of the autonomous American individual. To conceive of the self as a being threatened by the complex of social relations in which it is embedded, rather than as an ongoing creation and creator of these relations, is to conceive of an empty entity. To assert complacently the self-evidence and universality of true

(which is often to say, one's own) values and meanings is to deny the gap, as Palestinian writer Anton Shammas has put it, between a new world order and a New-World order. Finally, to abstract any academic or political agenda from the actual human minds, bodies, and communities that it affects is to open a deadening, and perhaps deadly, gulf between word and behavior. These are, unbeknownst to its authors, some of the lessons of Operation Campus Storm, as they are—and over time will continue to be—some of the harder lessons of Operation Desert Storm. That these lessons call for the critical reexamination of some of this country's traditional sources of strength and bases of pride increases their difficulty.

Operation Campus Storm dramatizes a point made by C. Wright Mills in the late fifties: "The detachment of liberalism from the facts of a going society makes it an excellent mask for those who do not, cannot, or will not do what would have to be done to realize its ideals." Michael Sandel, a more recent critic of the abstract liberal self and the theory of justice predicated upon it, has insisted that community, although it may be "an unsettling presence for justice" and for personal identity, must be understood to inform both. Multiculturalism constitutes one effort, or one group of loosely connected efforts, to act on that critique. It argues, with Sandel, that human agency is not "a premise of politics [but] its precarious achievement," and that "in certain moral circumstances the relevant description of the self may embrace more than a single, individual, human being." Thus, it strikes at the idea of an imperial American self, whether individual or nation, and is taken by some to be a form of terrorism. But the reform of which multiculturalism's opponents stand in terror may be viewed as the work that has to be done in order to bring about a genuine and genuinely heterogeneous American community. And even, perhaps, to liberate the American self from itself. □

RESPONSES

ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE: THE SELF-INTEREST OF MULTICULTURALISM

As the debate over multiculturalism grows ever more heated, the issues become ever less clear and the parties ever more rigid and less civil. Neither Josh Ozersky nor Evan Carton does much to clarify the precise stakes, although both insist that the stakes are high. Both agree that the tone of the debate is impassioned, if not shrill, and that its progress is fueled by misguided, or transcendental, moral fervor. They differ on whom to blame.

Differences notwithstanding, both are talking about the same troubled battleground of American higher education in the last decade of the twentieth century, and both recognize its connections to the recent history of our country. Ozersky links PC to the troubles and promises that pervaded the campuses in the 1960s; Carton links the war for monoculturalism to the war in the Gulf. A large percentage of the current professoriat came of academic age during the 1960s with its heated discussions of "relevance" in education; the war in the Gulf was explicitly portrayed as a way to shore up national pride and redeem national aspirations in the wake of the trauma of Vietnam. Both, without question, accept the unstated assumption that all the furor over multiculturalism is about something—that it matters.

Under normal conditions, this debate might be grounds for optimism: at least some Americans are engaged in a serious discussion about the purposes and content of a liberal education. Who, in the age of multinational corporations, mass media, and philistine preprofessional students, would have dared to predict that our campuses would be convulsed with debate over the values and vicissitudes of Western civilization? Who, in the age of pre-business, pre-law, and pre-med, would have presumed to argue that students take the humanities and soft social sciences (for that is what we are talking about) seriously?

But these are not normal conditions. Multiculturalism has erupted, like a summer thunderstorm, in the

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is the director of women's studies and the Eleonore Raul Professor of History at Emory University. She is the author of Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South *(University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and* Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Invidualism *(University of North Carolina Press, 1991).*

highly unstable conditions of contemporary American culture: economic recession; escalating costs of higher education; mounting ethnic diversity among student bodies; and widening gaps between social classes. In this wider context, the defense of multiculturalism emerges as a variant strain of America's long-standing equation of education with opportunity. The multiculturalist agenda rests upon the frequently unarticulated assumption that diversity in the curriculum will assure students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds a better chance at professional school admissions or lucrative careers after graduation. In this respect, and notwithstanding evocations of group identity, students who embrace multiculturalism are primarily interested in personal advancement. But the assumption that multiculturalism offers the best way to secure that advancement only holds true if coupled with others. One such assumption might be that reading works by people of one's own gender, race, or ethnicity provides inspiration and empowerment, thereby increasing motivation and accomplishment in other endeavors. Another might be that not being forced to read works by logocentric (rational), dead, white men makes it easier to get good grades and thereby to enhance prospects of future success. On the first assumption, reading of the successes of others of their people presumably convinces students that accomplishment is possible. Sadly, the common emphasis on the victimization of the dispossessed normally stresses the ways in which they were prevented from becoming physicists or senators, leaving open the possibility that the prevailing models of physicist or senator are no models to aspire to. The second assumption builds upon this consequence of the first, suggesting that the prevailing (logocentric) definitions of success should be dismissed as hostile to the empowerment of those who have not been trained to meet them.

Few would contest the obvious truth that we live in a multicultural world and that the more we know about it, the more productive citizens we are likely to be. But in most instances, the defense of multiculturalism does not propose to prepare us with any rigor to be citizens of that world. It does not, for instance, usually take the form of impassioned requests for more and stiffer language requirements. Rarely does it take the form of demands for greater exposure to the elite texts of other cultures. Even more rarely does it take the form of pleas for substantive training in economics or geography. Clearly, multiculturalism in its most pervasive form is not viewed as a skill. Multiculturalism primarily consists in exposure to English language texts that testify to and affirm the diversity of the personal experience of those who have reason to believe that their kind has been oppressed and excluded by dead white men.

At the core of the multicultural agenda lies a commitment to education—and, indeed, culture itself—as primarily the quest for an acceptable autobiography. Multiculturalists, building upon the demands for "relevance," assume that education must, above all, strengthen the student's positive sense of identity. Racial and ethnic pride, in this perspective, serve to strengthen individual self-confidence. Multiculturalism of this kind does not even, or necessarily, promote toleration for the diversity of others. If members of different racial and ethnic groups may unite in an initial demand for multicultural education, they may also rapidly divide over the respective claims of different ethnicities on the assumption that no one who is not of one's own kind can understand one's specific experience.

In real terms, however, the battle over multiculturalism is a battle over scarce resources and shrinking opportunities. To recognize this much does not deny the related battle over national identity, but does caution us to take the more extreme pronouncements pro and con with a grain of salt.

Both Ozersky and Carton would have us believe that the core of their disagreement lies in their respective attitudes toward individualism. For Ozersky, PC threatens the freedom and integrity of the individual; for Carton, opposition to multiculturalism amounts to the refusal to recognize "the actual human minds, bodies, and communities" in which any sense of self is embedded. Thus, in conclusion, Carton aligns himself with those who reject the "abstract liberal self" in favor of a richer and more flexible conception of heterogeneous community; he uncritically and enthusiastically defends multiculturalism as an appreciation of the claims of the group against the unreconstructed individualism promoted by the monoculturalists. Unfortunately, he fails to provide any definition of group or community, thus inviting the suspicion that he is only defending the claims of different kinds of individuals. His attack on individualism, like the multiculturalist position in general, collapses into little more than a defense of personalism: the reduction of the individual to personal experience shorn of public responsibility. The decomposition of liberal individualism into personalism has markedly accelerated since the nineteen sixties.

On both sides the ironies abound. The claims of the multiculturalists, in fact, derive directly from the individualism that they are attacking. They reject liberal individualism because of the group (white men) whom it has primarily advantaged, not because of its defense of individual right. To the contrary, they are pushing the claims of individual right to their logical conclusion. Car-

ton is not saying that we must repudiate the claims of the individual in favor of the group. He is not saying that we must arrive at collective policies that subordinate the claims of some to the claims of others in the interests of the group as a whole. He is emphatically *not* saying that the collectivity has the right and the responsibility to impose standards that will, in practice, advantage some over others. In the end, he is saying only that we must understand the individual not as an abstraction, but as the product of specific historical conditions and social relations. And this understanding leaves the dogma of individualism largely intact, ironically at a time when that dogma is proving woefully inadequate to the challenge of allocating our nation's dwindling educational resources and the opportunities they bestow.

There can be no doubt, as Carton observes, that the most impassioned opponents of multiculturalism do take the high ground of individualism in theory and the defense of the individual right of free speech in practice. At their most polemical, they tend to present the entire sweep of Western culture as a monolithic paean to individualism, thereby collapsing Aristotle into Thomas Jefferson and riding roughshod over historical change.

But the failings of the monocultural opposition in this regard do not justify a view of multiculturalism as a defense of group identity—notwithstanding the proclivity of multiculturalists to present it as such. Despite their claims to be representing various groups of heretofore dispossessed peoples, multiculturalists eschew any attempt to draw precise boundaries around the groups in question. At what point do Asian Americans claim their rights to speak as Korean Americans, or Chinese or Japanese Americans? African Americans indisputably have the strongest claims to a unique experience in the United States. But even when African Americans contend that they constitute a nation-within-a-nation, they do not always abrogate other considerations of class and color among themselves. Color clearly plays an important role in demarcating groups within the African-American community. Within the university, it can govern access to different fraternities and even, later in life, determine access to different professional associations. Class proves yet more troublesome. The misery of the African-American underclass and racist perceptions of it touch upon the lives of African-American students in innumerable and painful ways. But even that conflicted sense of racial solidarity does not prevent African-American students' commitment to their own individual success.

Carton is correct to assert that the debate over multiculturalism has everything to do with national identity. He is wrong, however, to assert that the defense of an American identity necessarily leads to the crippling of students' imaginations. The debate over multiculturalism has effectively substituted a struggle pitting national identity against no national identity for the potentially fruitful struggle over the shape that our national identity should take. Normally one would not expect that struggle to be waged on the terrain of our colleges and universities with the content of basic humanities courses as the spoils. That it is should prompt us to ask again what all the furor is about.

The truth is that we have more fully democratized higher education than any other nation in world history. We have also, more than any other nation in world history, made a decent living dependent upon acquisition of a higher education. The debate over multiculturalism concerns, above all, control of that education and the meal ticket it affords. At issue is the appropriate role of higher education, the extent and grounds of access to it, and the kind of training it should offer. If we were prepared to engage in *that* debate, we might begin to meet our responsibilities to prepare young people of different races, sexes, and ethnicities to compete in a highly technological, multicultural world—to reap the benefits of what a college education is supposed to be. We might even prompt them to think concretely about the future of our collective national identity.

In the end, any renewed vision of our national identity must take account of our growing cultural heterogeneity, and, more importantly, it must come to terms with the legacy of our inherited conception of individualism. American individualism has always embodied a complex commitment to the ideal of maximum freedom for the individual and maximum freedom for the market. Both ideals derive from the assumption that individual right preceded society, which derived from a compact among individuals. In attacking individualism, multiculturalists have largely failed to criticize the connection between the freedom of the individual and the freedom of the market. In the debates over education, they seem, above all, to be trying to limit the freedom of ideas in the interests of reallocating scarce resources and opportunities among individuals—of promoting the opportunities of different individuals. The implications of their goals point toward a new corporatist collectivity, but they have, thus far, resolutely failed to develop that aspect of their thought. Rhetorical evocation of group identity notwithstanding, multiculturalists remain mired in the individualism they claim to condemn. Any move beyond this deadlock requires a forthright reconsideration of the relation between individual freedom (and opportunity) and society—and a recognition that the rights of all individuals (including those of elite white men) derive from society. □

GERALD GRAFF: THE NONPOLITICS OF PC

I learned some time ago that in writing about the current cultural scene, things that may have been somewhat dubious when they were said had a habit of *becoming* true if one just waited around long enough. Just about a month ago, I quarreled with a number of my academic leftist friends when they took the line that Evan Carton defends in his essay, that "the war on multiculturalism and the war in the Gulf" are the same war. Surely even the American Right would not be so crass as to equate domestic critics of the humanities curriculum with foreign dictators.

But all that was before George Will came forward in *Newsweek* (April 22, 1991) to vindicate the Left's darkest suspicions. Will's article made it explicit: the academic Left is a more dangerous threat to the American way of life than Saddam Hussein. Will likened Lynne Cheney, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to her husband, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. Indeed, Will contended that the enemies her husband combats are "less dangerous in the long run than the domestic forces with which she must deal." Those forces, Will continued, "are fighting against the conservation of the common culture that is the nation's social cement." Will didn't go on to suggest whether the proper response to these sinister "domestic forces" would be Patriot missiles, or whether sanctions might be sufficient. But his remarks did have the effect of elevating academic leftists to a level of influence they would not have imagined in their wildest dreams.

Much as I would like to believe it, I have a hard time seeing the academic Left as quite the awesome juggernaut that Will and others make it out to be. What is scurrilous about the PC Scare is not its attack on dogmatism and self-righteousness, but its implication that these are vices that affect only one end of the political spectrum.

On the other hand, one does have to extend grudging admiration for the astuteness of a campaign that has succeeded in diverting so much of our attention to abuses of affirmative action that we ignore the abandonment of the nation's commitment to equal educational opportunity. At a time when black enrollment in colleges and graduate programs has been *decreasing* even by comparison with the pathetic level reached in the 1970s, it was no mean feat to get us to look away from such unpleasant facts to the excesses of those who are trying to do something about them.

I can't tell whether Josh Ozersky accepts the juggernaut theory of PC's extensiveness—the theory propounded by Dean Donald Kagan of Yale College, who claims that PC far exceeds the scope of McCarthyism in the 1950s. I assume Ozersky would not have written at such length, if he didn't think there was something to this theory. I don't know where Ozersky hangs out, but I don't recognize his picture of quasi-religious fanaticism on any campus I have been on lately. Nor is my confidence boosted by his lack of any evidence beyond a few quotations recycled from other anti-PC diatribes or twisted by ellipses from their original sense (Barbara Ehrenreich complained of having had to study the scholarship, not the literature, of "long-dead men").

As Michael Kinsley has pointed out in the *New Republic,* many anti-PC diatribes "are just lists of things the writer finds objectionable and would like—in the spirit of toleration and free inquiry—to expunge from the college curricula." In many cases the argument is carried by anecdotes, which are made to *sound* scandalous and disgraceful by nothing more than the scornful tone in which they are described. Thus *Time, Forbes,* and other magazines have repeated the story of the Duke English professor, Frank Lentricchia, who shows the film *The Godfather* in order "to teach his students that organized crime is 'a metaphor for American business as usual.'" Yes, how shocking, you think—until you reflect that something along these lines clearly *is* the message of *The Godfather* (book and movie both), as it is the message of about a thousand other recent, celebrated films and literary works. The real quarrel of the critics in such cases is with modern art itself and its habit of deviating occasionally from uplifting pieties; but then it's safer to smear professors than artists.

In a response to Will's article, the Renaissance scholar Stephen Greenblatt points out the far-reaching implications for the arts of Will's statement that what is at stake in the culture war is "the conservation of the common culture that is the nation's social cement." Greenblatt observes that "the best way to kill our literary inheritance is to turn it into a decorous liturgical celebration of the New World Order. Poets cannot soar when their feet are stuck in social cement."

Noting Will's dismissal of the presumably ridiculous idea that Shakespeare's plays might have something to

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Gerald Graff is John C. Shaffer Professor of Humanities and English at Northwestern University, and the author of Professing Literature: An Institutional History *(University of Chicago, 1987). He is currently completing a book on the culture war, to be published by W. W. Norton.*

do with racism and colonialism, Greenblatt comments:

> The student of Shakespeare who asks about racism, misogyny, or anti-Semitism is not on the slippery slope toward what George Will calls "collective amnesia and deculturation." He or she is on the way to understanding something about *Othello, The Taming of the Shrew,* and *The Merchant of Venice.* It is, I believe, all but impossible to understand these plays without grappling with the dark energies upon which Shakespeare's art so powerfully draws. And it is similarly difficult to come to terms with what *The Tempest* has to teach us about forgiveness, wisdom, and social atonement if we do not also come to terms with its relation to colonialism.

Note that Greenblatt does not claim that *The Merchant of Venice* or *The Tempest* can be reduced in some simple way to anti-Semitism or colonialism. He sees these plays as sites of conflict between these "dark energies" and more humane impulses.

Nor does Greenblatt say we should shift our attention from the *literary* quality of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* to their investment in anti-Semitism and colonialism. This investment is an inseparable part of that literary quality, part of what has given Shakespeare's work its aesthetic and cultural power. The suppression of the bestial Caliban by European authorities in *The Tempest* is indeed suggestive of the colonialist initiative in the New World that was in full swing in 1611 when the play was first performed.

Will might object that if Greenblatt is right that it is "all but impossible" to understand Shakespeare without grappling with racism and colonialism, how is it that ordinary people up to now seem to have understood him quite well without even being aware of such issues, much less grappling with them? I suspect Greenblatt would reply that if audiences and readers have often paid little attention to these issues, this tells us more about the restrictions of attention that have operated on the reading of literature than about Shakespeare. Revisionist interpretations such as Greenblatt's aim to change the way "ordinary people" experience literature by suggesting new kinds of questions to be aware of, questions that until recently have been regarded as unliterary. At stake in the clash between new and old readings of Shakespeare is a conflict over how we *should* read and the extent to which reading literature engages our politics even when the work in question isn't overtly about politics.

Granted, recent academic critics are prone to see politics virtually everywhere, but then their detractors seem to see it nowhere, and least of all in themselves. What I find most interesting about the intrepid opponents of PC is their ability to maintain their innocence of *having* any politics, much less "correct" politics. It will be interesting to see if Will can get away with accusing others of "the politicization of higher education" even as he equates the Chair of NEH's battle against the academic Left with the Republican Secretary of Defense's battle against Iraq. Nothing political in that, surely.

Not that there is anything new in circulating charges of politicization with no thought that they apply to oneself. NEH Chair Cheney herself was recently quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* calling for "the depoliticizing and deideologizing" of the humanities while almost in the same breath expressing pride in being labelled a "conservative populist."

In a similar way, Jacob Neusner, a member of the council that advises the National Endowment for the Arts, obviously saw nothing political about his own behavior when he proposed a rule—it was fortunately defeated—"that would prevent the agency from supporting art deemed 'political, ideological, or advocating social change,'" or when he urged in an article published around the same time that the curriculum "should continue to emphasize the history and culture of the West, while encompassing the rest, because the West has in fact made the world we know."

Of course it is possible that Neusner considered his own patriotic effusions in the article to be the sort of thing that ought to disqualify anyone from a government grant. Somehow, though, I doubt it, and suspect that Neusner saw nothing political in his assertion of the superiority of the West over other cultures, just as Cheney and Will see nothing political in their pronouncements.

The assumption seems to be that when you say "the American system is the best in the world" you are just stating a fact; whereas when you "advocate social change" you are being political and therefore don't deserve public funds. Change is political but patriotism is not.

If the PC Scare produces any good result, it will be in smoking out and exposing the hypocrisy of such apolitical claims, so that people who have up to now been taken in by the shell game played with words like "political" and "politically correct" will start to see the double standard it depends on.

But the PC battle may also force those on the Left to spell out more clearly to the not yet converted just why it is so naive to think that certain forms of literature and culture are not political. It is one thing to *assert* that the assumptions of a discipline can be deeply political even when they are not explicitly about politics (as when authors or their critics take it for granted that the Calibans of the world are just naturally slaves and deserve to be

ruled by their masters). But it is another thing to explain this assertion in terms that can be understood by people who don't already see it or agree with it.

As dangerous as the war on PC is, it offers a new opportunity to clarify forms of social criticism that still remain ill-understood and mysterious to most Americans. But this opportunity will be missed if the practitioners of such criticism don't begin to have more respect for the resistances of those whose assumptions they hope to change. □

Christine Stansell: Liberated Loutishness

What is this controversy really all about? "PC" and "multiculturalism" encompass everything and nothing—from the "rights" of belligerent students to mistreat their classmates to the papers that gay scholars deliver at the Modern Language Association.

Unfortunately, neither Josh Ozersky nor Evan Carton clarifies what we are arguing about or why we are arguing about it now. Ozersky's contribution is potted cultural history that details, once again, the rise of everything and nothing. At this superficial level of analysis, what can't you attribute in American culture to the search for a new religion? Ozersky explains nothing nor does he make the case there's anything to explain. His essay cites virtually no concrete examples of PC in action; rather, he mostly recycles generalizations and assertions lifted from other punditry. As for Carton, although I strongly side with his defense of curricular innovations, I find his conflation of prowar sentiment with the multicultural debate to be murky and unconvincing. A recourse to some hazy, all-embracing propensity of the American mind—itself a decidedly monolithic concept of the sort all varieties of multiculturalism rightly challenge—does nothing to illuminate what, exactly, is at stake. There is nothing to be gained by reducing the complex, tortuous politics of the Gulf War to an all-purpose analogue for scholarly trends, student behavior patterns, and curricular change.

Conservatives have for years been denouncing Afro-American and women's studies programs. Why have their diatribes suddenly become so much louder and captured so much public attention? How have conservatives managed to make news out of everything and nothing? We need some investigation and analysis. My own speculations lead back to the right-wing campus vigilantes headquartered during the Reagan years at Dartmouth College. Since the early 1980s, the *Dartmouth Review*—a publication with a remarkable ability to attract to its staff the worst bullies of the Ivy League—has sought to incite a nationwide *revanche* against curricular changes, in the process creating havoc on its own campus. Over the course of the 1980s, the *Review* collected a crew of young snobs, racists, anti-Semites, and homophobes who heaped ridicule, mockery, and personal abuse on feminists, Afro-Americanists, and gay classmates and tried to turn bigotry and cruelty into a hip new style. Yet while the *Review* exported cells of ambitious young cutthroats to other campuses (including my own, where several *Review* writers did a stint), they never managed elsewhere to do the intellectual damage they had done at Dartmouth, nor to elevate their invective into an "issue" of national concern. But the Dartmouth group did succeed in generating an aura of sensationalism that made university classrooms newsworthy and provided credibility and interest to a string of right-wing books on creeping Leftism within the universities: Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind,* Kimball's *Tenured Radicals,* and now former *Review* editor Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education.*

Obviously, the Dartmouth creeps did not create this current outburst singlehandedly. Indeed, it's striking how the conservative agenda has shifted from the Dartmouth style of naked bigotry to an ostensibly liberal and pluralist concern for the "rights" of those oppressed by the thought police. To understand fully how the multicultural issue has emerged, we need to look outside the elite campuses to conflicts in the public sector: to the role played by Lynne Cheney and the National Endowment for the Humanities, to bitter racial and gender conflicts on state university campuses, and to the way the Right has seized and polarized debate about the curricula and textbooks of elementary and high schools. It was through issues of public funding that the Right was able to integrate its assault on Left

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Christine Stansell teaches American history and directs the program in women's studies at Princeton University. She is the author of City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 *(Knopf, 1986) and a coeditor of* Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality *(New Feminist Library, 1983).*

influences in elite academic culture—the rantings of arch-conservative Hilton Kramer in the *New Criterion* were critical here—into the more generalized backlash against the "preferential treatment" of minorities and women.

All these developments have cohered in the last year into an elaborate conservative discourse, so tightly consistent internally that it can build solely upon itself. This process is at work, for example, in Ozersky's piece, which manages to convey an air of authority and plausibility virtually without recourse to evidence from the world outside the news magazines. A collection of students, professors, and disappointed job-seekers has seized upon the highly structured narrative formulas of the "I-Was-a-Victim-of-the-Thought-Police" genre to generate fast-breaking reports from the front that flesh out and confirm the existence of a perfidious radical power in schools and universities. The melodramatic language of "silencing" (a concept appropriated, interestingly, from feminist and Afro-American cultural criticism) makes for colorful anecdotes, easily packageable for editors who themselves may be resentful of changes in their own alma maters. But these stories, which the media's authority renders credible, are so filled with hyperbole and self-pity that, once you step outside the closed world of the debate, they mostly seem, well, silly. As Michael Kinsley notes in his wonderfully sensible article in *The New Republic,* the Brown student whose expulsion provoked an outcry in defense of First Amendment rights was, when you come right down to it, a drunk stumbling around campus screaming racial and homophobic insults in the middle of the night.

Yet while conservatives are defining the terms of this controversy very much to their own liking, they are not concocting it out of thin air. There is no question that in much of the country the 1980s witnessed a gradual—if still partial—transformation of campus life. The universities are the one place in America where liberal and left-wing thought has flourished, more or less. In the humanities, particularly history and literature, this is so much the case that a recent participant in the multicultural discussion, the Latin American historian Michael Jiminez, has spoken of a "paradigm shift" from a tidy and orderly progression of ideas, cultures, religions, and texts to a much more contentious and messy model: "civilization" as a web of conflicts and accommodations between groups, traditions, social and political orders.

This sea change in intellectual life has swept along its share of scoundrels, frauds, platitudinizers, and opportunists on all sides. The media has given a great deal of attention to zealotry on the Left as well as the Right. There is no reason for those committed to democratic change in the university to accede to the ways in which sensationalist thinkers come to represent, both to students and to a broader public, their respective corners of multiculturalism. At the extreme end of the spectrum, the racialist Leonard Jeffries, who inverts old theories of Aryan superiority to demonstrate the innate superiority of African ancestry, has captured the limelight with his version of "Afrocentrism," to the consternation of serious Africanist scholars and teachers. In the more respectable middle, law professor Catharine MacKinnon, who in the name of women's liberation denounces democratic theory, has come for many to represent the "feminist" voice, despite the highly sectarian nature of the feminist politics she espouses. We need to resist the temptations of spurious solidarity, and stress disagreement and debate, working against the simple-minded tendencies of students and of the public to equate ethnic, sexual, or racial communities with single points of view.

Sloganeering does not help. Those studying Afro-American and postcolonial cultures have devised subtle and powerful critiques of "Eurocentrism" as a particular kind of blindness to European entanglements with the histories of race, class, and imperialism. But to use "Eurocentric" as a term of derision, as earnestly right-minded students too often do, cedes much of the territory radical scholars have worked hard to claim in the last twenty years. The Europe that radical scholarship has revealed is one of Jews as well as Christians, peasants as well as lords, laundresses as well as ladies, the slave trade and imperial conquest along with constitutionalism and popular sovereignty. "Eurocentrism" as slogan seals off "Europe" in its own category and plays into the conservatives' ideologically driven, untruthful depiction of Western civilization as a tidy little island of Christian prosperity, cantatas, and cathedral building, interrupted only periodically by acts of God and national conflicts orchestrated from above. This use of Eurocentrism has also bred a troubling version of what a non-Eurocentric curriculum might look like: "Afrocentrism," for example, with a celebratory emphasis on the dynasties of Africa, especially the male dynasties, as if the triumphs of African monarchs rather than the heroic struggles of common people—African peasants and Afro-American farmers and laborers—provided the most salient history for young black people.

Finally, I wince at the phrase "dead white men" as a term of aspersion—as if there were something discreditable about being dead, as if all "white men" were spokesmen for a single, monotonously reiterated body of thought, as if "white men" had nothing in common with nonwhite men. Does Thomas Paine have nothing to say about the nature of political struggle against colonialism? Do Walter Benjamin and Emmanuel Ringel-

blum—two out of the millions of Jews for whom "whiteness" was, after all, not a salient "racial" characteristic—have nothing to teach about intellectual resistance to fascism? Even leaving aside the inspiriting properties of work produced in heroic circumstances, why hand over the canon to the conservatives? We can all learn from Toni Morrison's admonitions to American literary critics to turn to the canonical authors—Melville, Fitzgerald, Hemingway—and to read in their silences and their throwaways the "unspeakable things unspoken." □

Arnold Eisen: University Truths

This is not an easy time for American higher education. The university where I teach currently bears the brunt of an effort by the federal government to slash its contribution to the "indirect costs" associated with scientific research. Stanford's budget deficit for the next two years stands at $95 million; faculty and staff salaries have been frozen until March and morale is at an all-time low. State universities and community colleges throughout America are in even more serious trouble. The legislators whom they depend upon for their survival find higher education a safe target: its constituency is diffuse, its faculty is widely perceived to earn too much and teach too little, and its institutions can be tarred with labels that have a venerable history in America's anti-intellectual populist tradition: elitist, irrelevant, bastions of privilege. The quintessential liberal institution—the very symbol of open debate, free expression, and meritocratic advancement—may emerge from this time of trial as weak as liberalism itself in contemporary America.

Enter the debate over multiculturalism, featuring partisans of reform who make precisely the same charges against the university as do philistines on the Right. They claim that we are elitists, having for centuries excluded women and persons of color. We are irrelevant, having accorded pride of place to the books of "dead white males" while ignoring the contributions of America's ethnic minorities and the world's many victims of European imperialism. And we are decidedly bastions of privilege, to this day boasting few tenured women or minorities, and refusing to recognize, as Evan Carton puts it, that "knowledge and the organization of knowledge are products and instruments of power." The radical Left and the populist Right join in attacking the most fragile institution of the center, invoking precisely the same rhetoric to precisely opposite ends. Carton is correct: I respond passionately to these attacks from Left and Right not only because I am impatient with their pious simplicity, but because they threaten me. The Left is no less dangerous to a life and career I hold dear than is the Right. I wonder—and not at all rhetorically, these days—if this particular center is strong enough to hold.

The debate over multiculturalism is at bottom a debate over definition and possession of that center. Like most liberal faculty, I have no problem agreeing with the charge that universities have for too long excluded women and persons of color. I am a Jew who taught at Columbia (where Lionel Trilling was the first Jew admitted by the English department) before becoming a professor of religious studies and Jewish studies at an institution reputed to have long excluded Jews. Shall I deny the need to have Jewish studies in the American university curriculum, or Asian-American studies, or Afro-American studies, or women's studies? Shall I cavil at the demand that a curriculum that long excluded my religious tradition from consideration be widened to admit the contributions of others deemed irrelevant to the march of civilization? Of course not.

Two things, however, profoundly disturb me about the advocacy of multiculturalism. First, its case is too often put crudely by intelligent people who should, and do, know better. How easy, how cruel, and how utterly stupid to lump thousands of years of texts—Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and secular—in a rubble on which one scrawls the obscene label "dead white males." The image smacks to me of the crematorium. It shows no respect whatever for human dignity—of the individual or of the group. It holds up the finger to me, a one-day-to-be-dead white male, and announces that my irrelevance has already arrived. Please: I am not only an American who treasures the works of Herman Melville and Abraham Lincoln: I am a Jew obligated in my bones to three thousand years of my ancestors' reflection and behavior. And I am a professor who can bear witness to the fact (reported by participant after participant at a discussion this past December at the conference of the Association

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Arnold Eisen is an associate professor of religious studies at Stanford University.

for Jewish Studies in Boston) that all across America multiculturalism and ethnic studies seem inclined to exclude the study of Jews—because we are after all "white," and all too often males. So much for the distinctiveness that has enlivened our souls for three millennia and, again recently, led to the destruction of our bodies. Multiculturalism, in the name of opposition to cultural imperialism, almost everywhere denies us the right to cultural self-definition.

My second objection to the movement is its contempt for the fragility of the institution it seeks to alter. Carton seems perplexed by and suspicious of the recognition that "Americans currently experience both nationhood and selfhood as fragile and besieged." Why so? Is the modern deracination of the self a matter of such controversy? Is alarm at the ethnic strife sweeping the globe so incomprehensible?

My fears for the survival of classrooms relatively free from state interference should be no more surprising. We are not entirely free from outside influence; the people who fund us keep a close eye on what we do. They give us unusual time and space for maneuver in return for tangible contributions to individual growth and social well-being. We at the university generally pay this price gladly because we are convinced that we can and do make those contributions, while retaining a significant degree of freedom over the content of our teaching and the direction of our research. If we are perceived to exchange the search for truth and the promotion of common value—however difficult these may be to achieve—for the pursuit of PC, or the promotion of divisive social agendas, legislators wielding the budget axe will not be slow to react.

Radical critics would say: Bad faith, servants of the status quo, apologists for oppression. They seek purity—and power. I would reply: Knowledge is an instrument of power but not only that, just as you and I are more than our ideological commitments or our genders or ethnic loyalties. Universities are far from propagandists for their government and corporate sponsors. Can't we find a way for Chicano studies to exist alongside Jewish studies and, yes, Western Culture (which includes the others!), all the while believing, and convincing the public, that the outcome of the university's particular blend of criticism and commitment will be a stronger and wiser America? I believe we can—and now is the time when it must be done. □

Richard Perry and Patricia Williams: Freedom of Hate Speech

Until well after the Second World War, American institutions of higher education were bastions of a sort of cheery and thoughtlessly jingoistic nativism (isn't this some part of what we've always meant when we spoke of "that old college spirit"?). Except for the historically Black and women's colleges and a couple of schools serving immigrant populations (such as the City College of New York), the vast majority of the student bodies of America's hundreds of colleges were overwhelmingly U.S.-born, male, Christian, and of Northern European descent, and their faculties were even more so. As Evan Carton points out, the structure of the core liberal arts curriculum suggested that the university understood itself as an umpire of timeless values, high above the rough and tumble of mere politics, standing at the summit of Western civilization, which from this vantage point could be seen to have risen in an unbroken crescendo from Plato to NATO.

However, the assumptions that made the university an arbiter of "universal values" have been questioned, as multinational business and research institutions have evolved into ever more global and ethnically diverse enterprises. On the home front, meanwhile, the hard-won material gains of women and ethnic minorities have produced halting progress toward the goal of making American universities truly representative of the country's population as a whole. Responding to these historical developments, many have sought to make the core curriculum a more effective preparation for the diverse, multicultural environments of both the contemporary United States and the world. There have also been efforts to make the campus itself a more hospitable place for its newly heterogeneous population, most notably amendments to the campus conduct rules intended to discourage harassment on the basis of race, religion,

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Richard Perry is a research fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Law at the University of Louvain, Belgium. Patricia Williams is an associate professor of law and women's studies at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. She is the author of The Alchemy of Race and Rights *(Harvard University Press, 1991).*

ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

These reform efforts have been met with a virulent reaction that Josh Ozersky characterizes as "backlash" (even as he himself makes a notably confused and intemperate contribution to it). This backlash has recently been fueled by a series of often scurrilous stories in the most visible national magazines, and by fervent denunciations from the Left, Right, and center of political debate.

This confusion stems largely from the dishonest manner in which the debates have been reported. Most accounts of this campus dispute have been characterized by repeated distortions of fact and a profound bad faith with history. First, it is preposterous to claim, as many opponents of multiculturalism have, that these debates are about some supposed new infringement of the First Amendment rights of American citizens. No position seriously advocated by multiculturalists would have the slightest effect upon our right as Americans to be nativist, racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, homophobic, or just as narrowly monocultural-as-we-wanna-be in our personal lives. So too it remains entirely possible to stand in the public arena and call one another any of the whole litany of terms with which we as Americans have learned throughout our history to abuse one another. One might instructively compare this situation with the new Canadian constitution, which specifically limits the protection of certain kinds of hate speech, without much evidence that this provision has started Canada down that slippery slope toward being a Stalinist police state.

Nor do the multiculturalist reforms pose any institutional threat to the many securely tenured professors on the most prestigious faculties who teach doctrines (such as sociobiology and kindred theories on the margins of intellectual respectability) that are patently demeaning to members of the most long-abused groups. And the debate over multiculturalism scarcely disturbs the work of eminent scholars who regularly contrive to put a revisionist happy face upon the history of slavery, the Czarist pogroms, the Nazi genocides, the colonial subjugation of indigenous peoples, or the oppression of women.

What has *never* been true is that one member of an institution has an unrestrained legal right to harass another member and remain in the good graces of the institution.

Yet the recent barrage of media coverage would have us believe that some *novel* restriction is being imposed in multiculturalist speech and behavior codes. This misinformation has been conveyed by those who are apparently unable to distinguish between a liberty interest on the one hand and, on the other, a quite specific interest in being able to spout racist, sexist, and homophobic epithets completely unchallenged—without, in other words, the terrible inconvenience of feeling bad about it.

There is a sharp paradox at the heart of all this, a contradiction whose effective message is: "I have the right to express as much hatred as I want, so you shut up about it." It may be appropriate to defend the First Amendment rights of students who, for example, openly advocate Nazi policies. However, there has been a good deal of unacknowledged power-brokering that has informed the refusal even to think about the effect of relentless racist propagandizing on educational institutions in particular. Now those who even criticize this selective invocation of the First Amendment on the behalf of one social group over another are themselves called Nazis.

This fundamental paradox has bred a host of others. Conservatives such as George Will hurriedly discard their hallowed distinction between the public and private spheres when expediency beckons. Not long ago right-wingers were asserting that the evangelical Bob Jones University should be allowed to practice segregation and still be given a tax exemption—because it was a *private* institution. Where were these free-speech patriots in 1986 when Captain Goldman, a U.S. Air Force officer and an Orthodox Jew, was denied by the Reagan Supreme Court the right to wear a yarmulke at his desk job? And where are they now, when the new Supreme Court of our new world order has just asserted that the government *can* control speech between doctor and patient—heretofore one of the most sacred of privacy privileges—when the clinic receives federal funds and the topic of conversation is reproductive choice?

These ironies of free-speech opportunism have been accompanied by a breathtaking effort to rewrite our history. The multiculturalist reforms on campus have been characterized as being at odds with the two moral touchstones of recent political memory: the World War II-era fight against Nazi theory of Aryan supremacy; and the American anti-slavery and civil rights movements. Both of these struggles were in fact fought over—among other things—the sort of contested social meanings that can be traced directly to the present university discussions. The new interpretation of these two contests, however, rewrites them as triumphs of the inevitable, forward-marching progress of modern liberal individualism. Commentators from George Will to Shelby Steele have consistently depicted Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, as having pursued the higher moral ground of individual achievement rather than the validation of African-American collective social identity—as though these notions were inherently in opposition to one another. We are to imagine, for example, that the brave

people who faced fire hoses and police dogs and who sat-in at lunch counters in the 1950s and 1960s were after nothing more than, say, the market freedom of an individual Black American to eat a grilled cheese sandwich in the company of raving bigots. Conservative opponents of multiculturalism would have us forget about the other part of that struggle: the fight to expand the social space of all Blacks, and to re-articulate the political semantics of the collective identity of the descendants of slaves.

Another striking paradox is the way that much of this backlash proceeds in the name of democratic values, while mounting a sustained assault precisely on the democratic process of academic self-governance. The academic Right devotes itself to attacks on changes in curricula and conduct codes that have been adopted only after lengthy deliberation and votes by the faculty senates (such as in the Stanford Western civilization reforms or the Berkeley ethnic studies requirement), administrative committees, or student bodies. More curiously still, these assaults are typically said to be conducted in defense of something like "a free marketplace of ideas." Yet the recent multiculturalist changes might accurately be viewed as shifts in an intellectual marketplace where several positions have been rising in value, while another, older position, adamantly refusing to innovate, has been steadily losing its market share. There is a certain irony, therefore, in the spectacle of William Bennett and company engaged in a kind of status brokerage, trading on their appointed positions of authority for advantage they cannot gain via democratic votes in faculty senates or in the governing bodies of professional organizations.

Such distortions of the debate have worked to obscure what could be a genuine opportunity. The market idea, considered not simply as the nineteenth-century social-Darwinist mechanism whereby big fish eat little fish for the greater good, might serve as a multidimensional matrix for the representation of certain types of social information. If, for example, we could ever get to the point where we can honestly speak of having achieved a level playing-field in the marketplace of ideas (for this is precisely what is at stake in the present debates), then we might begin to understand the market as one means of representing multicentered networks of social interaction. Just as the American monetary system went off the gold standard in 1934, it is now time to get off the traditional *rational man* standard (the straight, white, male, Christian, English-speaking, middle-class individualist) as the universal measure of humanity. It is time to initiate a *perestroika* of personhood—to make a world in which all of us, in our multiple, overlapping, individual and collective identities can come to terms. □

Tisha B'Av

Merle Feld

Together we sit on the ground
and mourn for the peace of Jerusalem
like the treasure we each wanted—
we pulled and we pulled
you pulled and I pulled
and yes of course
finally we succeeded
in pulling it apart
we watched together
as it fell to the ground
and smashed at our feet
tears sprang to my eyes
tears to yours
each
separately
longing to undo the moment
to walk backwards into the past
to undo the moment
the moments of pulling
to walk backwards into the past
to the moment when
we could have shared
or taken turns
or something

Come my friend
(for haven't we become friends after all
sharing our intimate
our primal pain)
come my friend
come sit with me on the ground
let us heap ashes on each other
gently tenderly
I will teach you the melody
of my Echa
together we will sit on the ground
and mourn for the peace of Jerusalem

Merle Feld is a playwright and poet who spent 1989 and 1990 in Jerusalem working on Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Her most recent play, Across the Jordan, *explores the relationships between Israeli and Palestinian women.*

FICTION

Wings

Mikhail Iossel

Big country is a conductor's nightmare. It's full of passengers, and passengers are strangers. In August, when even in Leningrad the nights get longer, all you can think of is, "August. The autumn is near." Edita Pyekha, a Polish-born star, sings, "August. The autumn is near" from dawn to dawn over the train radio. You are young and sleepless. The road is endless. All you want is to be alone. You're tired. No stranger is a good man in your car.

In August, in the final week of our summer conductorship, we were headed south, for Kishinev. I had little to do and nothing to write down in my diary. My only passenger since Leningrad, a middle-aged man en route to Vitebsk, had been sitting in my "Employees only! Conductor on duty!" compartment for the last four hours, drinking vodka and making politically dubious statements. I listened, nodding. His big mouth could have gotten him in trouble, had he not immediately recognized an intelligent and decent person in me. As soon as he ambled off to the bathroom, leaving his jacket lying on the seat, I checked his jacket pockets, looking for his ID. I found it. He was not a journalist, as he had told me.

His occupation explained the emptiness of my car: he had reserved the entire car for himself. When he returned and began to open another bottle of vodka from his briefcase, I told him that I wished I were a journalist too. What could be more interesting than traveling all over the country on assignments, interviewing the officials, fighting the injustices of life? He only smiled at my youthful naiveté. "Don't burn yourself, my luna moth!" he said, and put his hand on my shoulder. "Journalism is not for the inexperienced! Sometimes I'm forced to write shameful lies. My wife has left me because I'm always traveling, never home. When people learn that I'm a journalist, they often won't open up for fear that I might write about them in my paper. It's very hard. Someone like you would easily find his ideals shattered by the roughness of real life!"

"I agree," I said. "But at least you can travel in empty cars during the summer-season rush! Your editor must have taken care of that."

He gave me a suspicious look. His eyes were shrewd. My eyes, on the other hand, were sincere. He smiled again, reassured, and said that some privileges came with the territory. Good and important journalists, indeed, had whole cars reserved for them from time to time. But so what? It was no big deal. I might deserve it, too, one day. In the meantime, he wanted us to become good friends—why not? He wished he were eighteen again, like me.

"Dream on!" I said. "My grandfather looks younger than you!" We laughed.

We proceeded slowly across the region of Pskov. The sun, surrounded by the pink haze, was about to set behind the western horizon. He kept drinking without getting visibly more drunk. I had met his type before, that meaty-faced breed, preserved in alcohol like permafrost in sub-zero temperatures. Our head conductor was one. Never fully sober, she still managed somehow to appear clear-headed. Yet everyone was aware of her gloomy private nightly libations.

It had been hours since I had last thought about our head conductor. I looked at my passenger, who was dully staring out the window, his head propped on his hand. He was a tall, well-fed Russian in a three-piece suit. His elbow kept slipping off the table. His bottle was empty. I looked at a briefcase by his feet. We had already crossed the Byelorussian border and were two hours away from Vitebsk.

"What time is it? I need more booze!" he said, yawning. "I know you have it hidden somewhere!" He wagged a finger at me.

"You're already drunk," I pointed out.

"That's nothing!" he said. "I can take in more booze than there's blood in your body!"

"I don't know if I can trust you, comrade," I said.

"Oh, come on!" He hiccupped. "I know you people aren't permitted to have booze, but if you run into some kind of trouble, we'll protect you."

Mikhail Iossel was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford from 1989 to 1991. He lives in San Francisco and will teach at the university of Minnesota in the fall. Excerpted from Every Hunter Wants to Know *by Mikhail Iossel. Copyright © 1991 by Mikhail Iossel. Reprinted with permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.*

"We?" I asked.

"Our newspaper," he said.

An hour later, drunk, he fell asleep, snoring, his mouth agape.

I woke him up in Vitebsk, the city where Marc Chagall was born, and where he began painting his flying Jews. The man's eyes were bloodshot. "Don't forget your briefcase!" I shouted in his ear.

He looked at me uncomprehendingly: "What?"

"Hey, you! You're a scumbag!" I said, slapping his shoulder. He smiled. I pushed him in the back. His head tilted back.

"Your briefcase! Don't forget it!" I repeated.

"Likewise," he said. He would fall back to sleep in whatever car awaited him.

I watched as he walked unsteadily away. By the time he awoke we would have already arrived in Kishinev, capital of Soviet Moldavia.

I returned to my car and found his briefcase still sitting on the floor in my compartment. I opened it; there were some papers inside. Suddenly the car was full of new passengers. It took me twenty minutes to accommodate them. They wanted tea. I served them and got richer by five rubles. Then I asked them if they needed blankets—not yet—and made an entry in my diary. Twenty minutes later, passing by the head conductor's door in her car, I heard the outbursts of rowdy laughter. She was inside with one of the railroad inspectors. I tapped lightly on her door, just in case. Of course, she could hear nothing. I stood there for a while, thinking, with my diary beneath my arm. Three hours later we were in Kalinkovichi, a small Byelorussian town.

As we approached the station, I saw a barefoot Kalinkovichi girl, leaning easily against a Byelorussian tree in the dusk. I had seen her four times before, twice in June and twice in July, for only a few minutes. She was my age. I could fall in love with her. I didn't know her name, though. We were ten meters away from each other. I hoped she could read the romantic insignia on my drab-green uniform, below the little brass wings, the railroad emblem: "Leningrad College Students' Railroad Summer Training." "I'll be back!" I shouted. It was a lie. I knew I would never see her again. Our two August minutes in Kalinkovichi had expired, and I waved a take-off flag to the engineer. Soon it grew dark.

The night was soft and fragrant, and my comrades and I were in serious jeopardy. Our head conductor had outdone herself. She had stolen my diary. It had to be her: no one else could sink this low. She had seen me writing something in a thick notebook day after day, and apparently didn't like it. Now she had plenty of evidence against us to present to the College Party Committee.

Late at night, we had an emergency meeting. All of us, the temporary conductors, were there.

When I told my friends what happened, they only shook their heads in disbelief and rolled their eyes. "Why did you, an intelligent person, need a diary?" they said. "It's so sentimental! A diary, for crying out loud!"

"Maybe I'm going to be a writer!" I said. We laughed.

Sasha K., whose car was next to mine, suggested we simply throw her from the train. "She's forfeited her right to stay alive!" he exclaimed. "She's humiliated us enough! She's so drunk all the time, they'll think she fell out by herself!" There was silence. Then I asked him if he knew how it felt to kill a human being. "No!" he said. "But it's been done!" I noticed that Veronica S. and Vitya N. were looking at each other. I thought it was strange.

It was my turn to speak. "I know what you're thinking," I said. "You're scared. When she presents my diary to the College Party Committee, they won't listen to us, they'll listen to her. After all, she belongs in their world. She's one of them. Is that what you're thinking?"

They nodded gravely.

"That's what I'm thinking, too," I said. "But listen, we're all members of the Union of the Communist Youth, aren't we? We're their future! What harm can they do to their own future?"

"We don't know. *You* tell us," said Dima L. "We haven't read your diary, Yevgeny. If it's bad, they could easily kick us out of college."

"You personally have nothing to be afraid of," I assured him. "I don't believe I even mentioned your name once in my diary."

He brightened. "That's good!"

We were sitting in his car, the emptiest one that night, all twenty-four of us, thinking sad thoughts. The train, all twenty-four of its cars, was closing in on Ovruch, our first Ukrainian stop. Vitya's hand was on Veronica's shoulder. I thought that was odd since Veronica and I had almost spent the night together five hundred kilometers ago, near Pskov, during the last trip, and I believed that it had meant a lot to both of us.

Veronica cleared her throat and said that she had overheard the head conductor, passing by her door two hours after Vitebsk, telling the railroad inspector, with whom she was drinking, that now she had that whole bunch of little intelligentsia kikes in her pocket. She giggled. Yura T., our team leader, winced at the word "kikes." I noticed that Inna F. was smiling at me. I had thought that she was more interested in Venya D., who was tall and dark, and handsome, and maybe she was.

"Kikes, huh?" Yura T. repeated angrily. "Well, I'll show her!"

"Oh, shut up, Yura!" I said.

Not all of us were Jewish, like me. There may have been a handful, but we had no way of knowing. Only the head conductor knew our nationalities, yet to her we were all the same. Yura T., our leader, perennially gloomy, also knew, since he had seen our papers, but he refused to talk about it. I knew that he was Jewish himself.

Venya, smiling self-confidently at Inna, got up from his cot and turned on his cassette player. The only tape he had was Paul McCartney with his new group singing "Banotherun." It was of very poor quality, had no label on it, and none of us knew enough English to make any sense of the title. I suspected that we weren't getting it right. Every time we heard Paul McCartney's voice, it reminded us that the Beatles no longer existed. Somehow it felt like a betrayal, as though they had finally surrendered to the thinly veiled hatred of our newspapers and TV, our head conductor and the College Party Committee. It felt pretty bad. But on the other hand, to make things a little easier for us, we were also free to think of Paul McCartney as just a jerk, one of them, who had nothing to do with us. Did it matter? No, not really. But then again: yes, it did.

In the night, as our train crossed the Ukrainian border, we started dancing, all of us, getting carried away in the limited space between the cots on both sides of the aisle. Since there were sixteen boys and eight girls among us, eight boys had to dance with each other. I was dancing with Inna, and Vitya N. with Veronica. We tried to rock and sway in sync with the train, letting go of our partners to clap our hands at the refrain, joining in with Paul McCartney's lead: "Banotherun!" The light in the car was bright and yellow. Our train was moving fast. The Ukrainian night was boundlessly, Gogolesquely black, and had anyone been standing atop one of the dark, smooth, mellow hills outside, he could have seen us, twenty-four boys and girls in green uniforms, dancing in the yellow bowl of light, clapping our hands and opening our mouths silently now and then, skimming over land without ever touching it with our feet, headed south in the end of the summer.

Early in the morning we were in Kotovsk, our last Ukrainian stop. It was a tiny town. I jumped off the train with two empty buckets in my hands. Old women with prune-like faces were selling cheap cherries, apricots, and peaches on the narrow train-station platform. Soon I had my buckets filled with apricots and peaches. It cost me a ruble.

As I had almost expected, Veronica and Vitya had gotten off the train together. He bought her an ice cream.

The sun was everywhere. Even the beggars on the platform seemed to be having a terrific time in Kotovsk. They pushed and shoved each other good-naturedly, laughing, speaking in a staccato mix of Ukrainian and Russian. Green mountains surrounded the town. I thought: "This is my country." I was fifteen hundred kilometers away from home.

I stood in the middle of the platform, eating a peach, in front of the bronze bust of Grigory Kotovsky, the namesake of the town and a legendary cavalry hero of the Civil War. He looked like a boulder with ears. I regretted not having my diary where I could attempt to describe the complex smell of corn, heat, drying horse manure, apricots, and peaches in the air.

Venya, the handsome one, stuck his head out of the window and shouted something I couldn't hear against the laughter of the beggars and the old women's exclamations. I shrugged. He pushed his neck further through the window.

"The news!" he shouted again. "On the radio! They've just impeached Richard Nixon!"

"Who has?" Vitya N. asked. They were standing behind my back, his hand on her shoulder.

"The Americans!" Venya shouted.

"Big deal. Screw Nixon!" I said.

"Who's Nixon?" Veronica asked, widening her eyes. Her thin, childish voice was annoying.

"Don't tell me you don't know who he is," I said. "Boy, you must be even dumber than you look!"

She shrugged her shoulders, and Vitya's hand slipped off one of them. He put it back. "Watch your mouth! You're talking with my girlfriend!" he said.

"For your information, 'impeachment' and 'peaches' sound alike in English!" said Venya, his head still in the window. I told him to stop showing off and shut up.

I saw our head conductor. Her drunken face was looming in the sun two cars away. Grinning, she looked at me. I turned around and picked up my buckets from the platform. Forty minutes later, as we were passing Bendery, I stood in the open door of my car, waving to a team of corn pickers, ten or twelve young and tanned Moldavian girls in red kerchiefs, smiling behind yellow walls of corn. "Don't get married before I come back!" I shouted. They saw me flying by with my mouth open. One of them shouted something in response and they burst out laughing.

That night, homebound, after an afternoon in Kishinev, I had only one passenger, a stocky man en route to Vitebsk. He had boarded the train a minute before departure and asked me if I had found a briefcase left yesterday by his colleague in my car. I showed it to him. "I was going to hand it to the department of unclaimed items at the train station in Leningrad," I said. He told me that I should hand it to him.

He seemed tense. I offered him a glass of wine.

He declined.

I offered him a glass of tea. The night was muggy. He nodded. "Tea would be good. The night is hot," he said.

He took off his jacket and asked me if I had by any chance taken a look at the briefcase's contents.

"Oh, comrade, there's no capacity for idle curiosity left in me," I said.

"Nothing important in there," he told me, opening the briefcase and showing me a stack of papers inside. "Bits and pieces of some articles in progress, that's all."

"None of my business. I mind my own business," I said.

As soon as he stepped out of the compartment, heading for the bathroom and leaving his jacket hanging neatly from the chair, I quickly checked his jacket pockets, looking for his ID. I found it.

When he returned, I told him that I'd soon have my colleagues over for a discussion about our head conductor's behavior. Perhaps he'd find it interesting. She had stolen my diary. He was welcome to sit in, if he liked.

"Why not?" he said. "I'd love to. Maybe our newspaper could be of use to you. Maybe we could even become friends. Our newspaper is looking for young friends."

I shook my head. "Friendship is such an enormous word! It's like a bright light, like a lamp, and I'm like a moth drawn to it!" I said. "I'm afraid to burn my wings! I feel alienated! To tell you the truth, I don't believe in friendship with a stranger, especially if he's older than me. How can I, comrade? I've seen so many dishonest people!"

He smiled at me. I offered him a glass of wine. He nodded.

"I understand you perfectly, my friend. Believe me, I can share your anger and confusion. It's us against them. Let's storm the barricades! The world stinks, it's a disgusting place, I know. All you need is love, love, love is all you need! But all you really need is a friend. Maybe we could become friends. Think about it!"

I shook my head: no. Journalists have to write lots of shameful lies. They're not us. He's not us. He told me I was wrong, he was us. I shook my head again.

We were sitting in my car, the twenty-two of us. I knew, sadly, that Veronica and Vitya wouldn't come. The night was dark and hot. We drank many jugs of young Moldavian wine from Kishinev. It was rosy, thick, and tangy. My passenger joined in our conversation, laughing at our jokes, slapping his knees. He tried hard. I asked Inna to sit next to him and keep his glass full, because no matter what he had in mind, he was safer being drunk. She said she didn't like him.

"I don't blame you, Inna," I said.

We started dancing. He sat drunkenly, smiling condescendingly, kindly. Venya asked him if he knew any English. He nodded and began translating the lyrics of "Banotherun," but the only words he could come up with were "if I ever get out of here" and "if we ever get out of here."

"The tape's very poor," he said.

"Yeah, right! Let's blame the tape for everything!" we said.

I told Inna to invite him to dance. She shrugged. Dancing makes a drinking person more drunk, I told her.

"Oh, all right!" She tugged at his sleeve. He got up and started dancing, staggering and stumbling, and then plopped down on his chair, out of breath.

"Oh, to be young again! I feel like I'm eighteen again!" He slapped Sasha K. on the back: "Hey, Jude! Let it be!" We laughed, and someone told him that he was old enough to be our father.

"Me?" He was shaken up. "If *I'm* old enough to be your father, then just about anyone could be your father! That Beatle on the tape could be your father!"

We laughed again.

I asked Venya how old Paul McCartney was. Venya didn't know: maybe thirty-two, thirty-three.

"That's how old I am—thirty-three!" my passenger exclaimed. Sasha told him to shut up. The idea of having Paul McCartney for our father was bizarre. In that case, we could be our own fathers.



The man's lips quivered, and his face began to take on the stubborn, angry, gleeful expression of a teenager who had always been beaten and humiliated by his schoolmates. As I looked at him, it occurred to me that there was a ready explanation on his face for why he worked where he worked. "Inna!" I said. She put her hand on his shoulder and told him that we didn't mean to hurt him, that we didn't hate him.

"Yes you do!" he exclaimed, his lips still quivering. "Why do you hate me?"

"Because we don't know you!" we said. "Who are you? What are you? Are you one of us? No, you're one of them!"

I stood up and told them that he was a journalist.

"Journalists are scumbags!" Sasha K. said.

"Not all of them," I said. "Some of them are honest."

"What are you talking about?" the man said. He looked puzzled.

The car door slid open and the head conductor walked in. She was sober. She saw us drinking and told us to please continue. She had my diary in her hand, squeezing it hard. We fell silent.

Everyone looked at me. "When did you start stealing other people's diaries?" I asked her, trying not to sound too sardonic. "Do you think it's called civilized behavior?"

She grinned. "I didn't even have to steal it! Someone sneaked it under my door in an envelope! And you probably think of yourselves as friends! You're so hopeless to not even be able to notice a Judas in your ranks!"

No one believed her, of course. "Nonsense! You don't know what you're talking about!" I said. "What a pathetic lie!" Everyone nodded.

"Oh well," she said. "I don't have time to argue with you. I don't care what you think. So I've read it! Big deal! You don't like me? That's fine, because I don't like you, either!" She opened my diary and prepared to start reading.

I told her to read the last entry.

"As you wish," she said, shrugging, and flipped through the pages. "'I'm afraid she's going to steal my diary,'" she read. "'She's seen me writing in it, day after day, and apparently didn't like it. She's a mean, brainless creature. When I look at her ruddy face with those beady eyes, I'm afraid I might throw up!'"

She clenched her teeth. I could see surprise on her face.

"See how well I know you?" I said.

"You're so clever!" she said, sarcastically.

"That's right!" I said.

"I didn't steal it!" she repeated. "I swear!"

"Oh, give me a break!" I said. "Who do you think we are?" We laughed. She told Venya to hand her the tape. He glanced at me, as if to ask: Should I? "Let her have the tape," I said. "She's not going to have much use for it. We'll get another tape."

She put Paul McCartney's tape in her pocket. I noticed a wedding ring on her ring finger. I tried to imagine the man who had married her. I laughed; I couldn't help it. She gave me a malicious stare and began to read my diary out loud, lowering and raising her voice. She read slowly. She was a lousy reader. All my fears, all my insecurities, all my loves! All that bullshit. I looked around and met the quiet eyes of my friends.

"The Diary of Yevgeny L., a Temporary Conductor. Day one. We'd left Leningrad in the morning. Odessa is our destination. In the afternoon, I had some red wine with one of my passengers. He's an old, jovial man with bushy eyebrows that look like Brezhnev's. He seems much smarter, though. At least, he can pronounce most of the consonants. He gave me a ruble for the tea, three more for the blankets, and told me to keep the change. What is he, a Rothschild? I have a good feeling that this is going to be a highly rewarding summer! Then Veronica S. and Sasha K. stopped by on their way to our insipid leader Yura T.'s car. We all had some more wine. She's very beautiful, though dumb, and I'd like to sleep with her very much. And maybe I will. Who knows? This is going to be a long, long summer. As to Sasha K., he's just a harmless idiot. Soon we had more guests: Vitya N., Inna F., and Venya D. Vitya seems to be all right, not too bright. But pleasant enough, until he opens his mouth and puts everyone to sleep with his talk about soccer. Venya D. is quite good-looking, but boy, is he stupid! He and Veronica probably would be a perfect match. Unfortunately, Inna seems to be in love with him. What's wrong with women? Can't they appreciate someone witty and clever? When we had run out of wine, I went to my compartment and got a bottle of vodka. I keep it hidden under my pillow. We had been warned, of course, that if we were caught red-handed, with even one bottle of vodka in the car, we'd be kicked out of college. But hey, he who doesn't take chances doesn't get to drink the champagne! My passenger gave me ten rubles for that bottle. God, so far I just love this job! Music, wine, girls, new people, and the vast expanses of Russia! Slowly, slowly, the air outside grew dark. I was getting drunk."

"Enough already!" I said. "We get the idea!"

Inna sat next to me. She put her hand on my shoulder. I wished I could love her instead of Veronica.

"I don't think you deserve to stay in a Soviet college," the head conductor said, looking up from the pages. "I don't think you deserve the honor of wearing those railroad wings on your uniforms. I don't think the Party

(Continued on p. 91)

A Poetry Supplement

Edited by Robert Pinsky

Introduction

Here is a selection of work by poets who were invited to send a poem for a small anthology to be published in *Tikkun*—a sampling of distinguished contemporary poetry, American or by American presences such as Thom Gunn, Czeslaw Milosz, and Seamus Heaney. As editor of the section, I did not prescribe subject matter, and I have included poets both Jewish and not (sometimes I did not know which poets were Jewish, nor did I have a fixed definition of "Jewish").

So this group of poems, remarkable in itself, also supplies a cross-section of evidence for certain questions, such as, "What might it mean for an American poet to be a Jew?"

In a trite stereotype, the lyric poet must be intuitive or vatic, an impractical dreamer, solemn, intimate with nature, necessarily remote from society, reticent, rooted beyond the passages of history. If American, this ideal poet of cliché embraces the people along with the soil, opening into the country from a Whitmanian center.

A trite stereotype of the Jew neatly inverts that vulgar template: the Jew is supposed to be cerebral or worldly, a pragmatic dealer, comic, separated from nature, necessarily enmeshed in society, voluble, trapped in the passages of history. In America, the ideal Jew of cliché supplies a perspective from the alienated fringe.

Between these two enfeebled but still-confining ghosts of expectation, compounded of half-truths and less, the actual poet tries to forge works of art. What are those works, in this country, in this language? Not, in the Yiddish poet Zishe Landau's phrase, "the rhyme department of the Jewish labor movement"—which in contemporary terms might mean cleaving for material to the Holocaust, to the Old Testament, or to reminiscences of the immigrant generation. Not that, but something.

Recently I asked the Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld what it was like to write naturalistic fiction in a sacred language—it seemed peculiar, didn't it? Aharon customarily teaches creative writing not directly, by discussing student work in class, but indirectly, by discussing assignments in the Bible as examples of economy, objectivity, effective dialogue, superior use of dreams, clear imagery, and so forth. As a visiting professor at Boston University, he had found himself for the first time teaching the Bible to aspiring fiction writers not in Hebrew, but in the Revised Standard English translation.

So his answer to my question about writing novels in Hebrew grew out of his experience of the Bible in English, full of terms that he heard as alien to the original.

"What is it like for you," he asked me, "to write your poems in a Christian language—it seems peculiar, doesn't it?"

Somewhere in the Zen-master penetration of Aharon's response, somewhere in the Christian weight he felt English added to certain terms like "spirit"—a weight invisible to me?—somewhere in our little dialogue's opening of the relation of language to culture, and underlying culture religion, somewhere in his question, I can feel the Magnetic North attracting the poet who means to sail beyond opposed clichés about Jews and about poetry.

For if this language we inhabit is "Christian" from the viewpoint of the Hebrew Bible, it is not—not for centuries, and certainly not after the more-or-less Jewish modernists Freud and Marx—a language of Christendom: not for anyone, least of all for a practicing Christian. American poets from Anne Bradstreet on have inherited the language of George Herbert. In some sense we still do write and still strive to transform that language. But for us it is also the transformed language of Dickinson and Whitman—and the language of William Carlos Williams, and of Allen Ginsberg, and of the youngest poets in this section of *Tikkun*. For that matter, it is also the language of such Anglophone writers as Chinua Achebe and V.S. Naipaul.

And if American poetry is not a poetry of Christendom, for the same reasons it is not a poetry of Jewry, the former island culture—some say "colony"—within Christendom. Modernity is not a secularized Christianity, someone has said; equally, it is not a secularized Judaism.

Robert Pinsky's books of poetry include The Want Bone *(Ecco Press, 1990) and* History of My Heart *(Ecco Press, 1985). His most recent prose work,* Poetry and the World *(Ecco Press, 1988), was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle award in criticism.*

On the other hand, Christianity and Judaism have inhered powerfully not only in our language but also in our perceptions, our ongoing histories, as taken for granted as the shapes of our bodies—as well as in religious practices. And the modern century's idea of such survival seems increasingly naive, or at least open to revision.

Now that "the modern" has begun to seem a period that is over, succeeded by the idea of a postmodern that incorporates it, religious ideas seem not only more persistent than modernism sometimes assumed, but more liable to a process of complex recombining and mutual influence. Poetry is not simply a transcending of the past but a remaking of it. Could the Jewish avant-garde modernist writers Louis Zukofsky and Charles Reznikoff have been attracted to the aesthetic of Ezra Pound because it was encyclopedic and universalizing, and therefore a way to dissolve the boundary between the internal "colony" and the enclosing larger culture, to disperse historical destinies in a multitude of voices? If so, their vision may have been cerebral, a willed ideal of freedom.

Religious ideas, religious cultures, seem to survive in ways that defy both such universalizing projects on the one hand and reactionary projects like that of T.S. Eliot on the other hand. In our daily world, a "postmodern" world in this sense, religion seems to operate as another lens or frame among many—including that modernist mold-breaking that once threatened to efface religion. Without being so foolish or presumptuous as to speak of works that are "post-Christendom" or "post-Jewry," one could define a state of mind where the former internal island and the former surrounding culture produce new works drawing freely on either tradition—or both, or neither.



Of course that freely allusive, syncretic state of mind is far from universal: that is one of the striking things about it.

Perhaps the quest is to have it both ways—to preserve the cultural richness of difference along with the scope, ease, and depth of universality. In his provocative book *The Ordeal of Civility,* John Murray Cuddihy suggests a tribal element in Jewish culture that makes no provision for an individual to leave the fold, and another element in the same culture that is centrifugal. These forces of outward assimilation and inward retention have a peculiar correspondence in poetry, the art where language is made especially social or communal by form, and especially intimate by rhythm: the most stylized yet the most bodily form of language. And the medium of poetry is a single, actual human voice, though it may echo multitudes.

So if there is a continuity I see running through these poems, whose vitality is partly their variousness, it has to do with an informed sense of cultural freedom, a formal ease of reference with all of freedom's ebullience, and all of freedom's tentativeness and second thoughts.

I am thinking, for example, of the way that in Gerald Stern's "Shouting" and Allen Grossman's "Poland of Death" these Jewish poets have the energy to be both vatic and comic, evading the stock ideas I began with in this introduction. The eluding of expectation, the invocation of historical ideas only at oblique or unpredictable angles appears in other poems as well, for example when in the poems by Heather McHugh, Thom Gunn, and Marie Howe, a worldly, secular social context is transformed by a quasi-religious vision, or a religious one: for McHugh, the idealistic humanism of Giordano Bruno; for Gunn, the idealistic liberation of gay culture before AIDS ("our Dionysian experiment"); for Howe, a saying of Jesus.

I won't attempt to catalogue these poems by writing a phrase or two about each of them, but I will salute their unfettered historical perspective, an omnivorous assertion of our wide, shared, sometimes terrible past, by quoting the last lines of Philip Levine's "New Days for Old, Old Days for New":

> So when I waken on a pillow of moonlight
> I take it all, nightmares, daydreams,
>
> the stories my children scatter down
> the arteries of my care. The mind runs on,
> even under a stone, the mind runs on and on.
> A new day's here, with or without the moon. □

New Days for Old, Old Days for New

The old moon fades, the flies tune their voices
for the dawn song. Morning glories
trumpet from the fence, the shadows hide.

My brother Priscolnik wanders lost between
Nîmes and Dombrovitz. A dust cloud carries
the gospel of his final words, his curses,

his sighs, all the volumes of his loss–
my tiny brother, the peddler, the magician
whose hands transformed old shirts to new.

Don't tell me nothing about discipline.
I come from a people of the road, a line
of prophets who slept on sticks and stones,

who called the day down in the language
of Abraham and Isaac. At the well my father
had only sand to drink, his father drank

his own life down, breath by last breath.
So when I waken on a pillow of moonlight
I take it all, nightmares, daydreams,

the stories my children scatter down
the arteries of my care. The mind runs on,
even under a stone, the mind runs on and on.
A new day's here, with or without the moon.

—Philip Levine

December 1

The vineyard country, reddish, carmine-brown in this
season.
A blue outline of hills above a fertile valley.
It's warm as long as the sun does not set, cold in the
shadows.
A strong sauna and then swimming in a pool
surrounded by trees.
Dark redwoods, transparent pale-leaved birches.
In their delicate network, a sliver of moon.
I describe this because I have learned to doubt
philosophy
and the visible world is all that remains.

—Czeslaw Milosz

Shouting

Now I am reading a psalm,
the lack of mercy here and there,
doves freezing in the doorway.

I sink into something,
water covers me up to my neck,
my throat is burning.

It is a joy like this,
more fat than blind, more blind
than deaf, though that is coming. Either I fly

or I walk, but either way there is no sweetness.
Give me back, it says,
the brilliance of early October. I turn blue

when I think of it. The sun made a shadow on the wall,
the moon had a nimbus. I think of it and I moan.
My breath falters. I keep going back and back.

First there was fear, though I never called it
that, then there was silence. First there was sadness,
then there was anger. There is snow on my roof;

it makes me think of justice. I go back
over and over again. The white footprints
have nothing exactly to do with it. They lie

between the trees, the powder fills them up.
I make one turn–it doesn't matter–I could have
made another. There is a rock, it is

a teacher, it is a shield. I start to sing
a song with my hands; there is a pool of hot water;
I sit there with the rest; this is going back

with a vengeance; life was boiling; what we lacked
was a nucleus; we ate sulfur; there was light
twelve miles away; there was a great disorder.

What good is pity? I shake the needles; snow
slides down my neck. What I sing is buried.
I walk on the left side three or four miles a day,
shouting.

—Gerald Stern

From A Book of Prophets

The Return of Jonah by Way of Swanawic as Recorded by a West Saxon Scribe, 871 A.D.

Blown through the knothole, the tophole, the hole in its head
with the fat of whale on my hands and knees
with whale blubber sticking to me

Out of the gut maze, lifted up, drawn forth
I speak now through the jaw of the whale, through bone
baleen, teeth not my teeth where the whale
breath wheezes, words whistle and sing–

Not my voice, whale voice, not my dream
I speak through *narwal*, *squalus*, *cetus*, *hvalr*

Shut in, my flesh against whale flesh
head crammed into black vessels of whale blood
(yet I know nothing of whale)
under the heart smear, the brain wick, the tallow
mouth thick with dark
skidding and slippery the memory-child

Hvalr what the Norsemen said
Hwael what the kinsmen of Alfred threw all their might
sharpened like ivory, like the point of a star
into—the side, the flukes, the rolling belly
eye deeper than any hole
as they heaved out the bones blazoned
with the dark lineage of whale

And the women, faces anointed with the suint of sheep
chewing on their fatty lamps to hasten birth

Othere saw sixty in one day
But how can I number the dark the sheer weight
of the void defying measure
I who swam in whale blood, bedded in the divine clots
where darkness rises and sets
knowing nothing of whale

Losing the word for water, I swam
Losing the word for breath, I sang
Losing the word for sleep, I fell headfirst beating

—Susan Mitchell

Saturday Night

There are many different varieties of New Jerusalem,
Political, pharmaceutical–I've visited most of them.
But of all the embodiments ever built, I'd only return to one,
For the sexual New Jerusalem was by far the greatest fun.

I prowl the labyrinthine corridors
And have a sense of being underground
As in a mine . . . dim light, the many floors,
The bays, the heat, the tape's explosive sound.
People still entering, though it is 3 a.m.,
Stripping at lockers and, with a towel tied round,
Stepping out hot for love or stratagem,
Pausing at thresholds (wonder never ends),
Peering at others, as others peer at them
Like people in shelters searching for their friends
Among the group come newest from the street.
And in each room a different scene attends:
Friends by the bedful lounging on one sheet,
Playing cards, smoking, while the drugs come on,
Or watching the foot-traffic on the beat,
Ready for every fresh phenomenon.
This was the Barracks, this the divine rage
In 1975, that time is gone.
All here, of any looks, of any age,
Will get whatever they are looking for,
Or something close, the rapture they engage
Renewable each night. If, furthermore,
Our Dionysian experiment
To build a city never dared before
Dies without reaching to its full extent,
At least in the endeavor we translate
Our common ecstasy to a brief ascent
Of the complete, grasped, paradisal state,
Against the wisdom pointing us away.

What hopeless hopefulness. I watch, I wait–
The embraces slip, and nothing seems to stay
In our community of the carnal heart.
Some lose conviction in mid-arc of play,
Their skin turns numb, they dress and will depart:
The perfect body, lingering on goodbyes,
Cannot find strength now for another start.
Dealers move in, and murmuring advertise
Drugs from each doorway with a business frown.
Mattresses lose their springs. Beds crack, capsize,
And spill their occupants on the floor to drown.
Walls darken with the mold, or is it rash?
At length the baths catch fire and then burn down,
And blackened beams dam up the bays of ash.

—Thom Gunn

Man and Boy

I
"Catch the old one first,"
(My father's joke was also old, and heavy
And predictable). "Then the young ones
Will all follow, and Bob's your Uncle."

On slow bright river evenings, the sweet time
Made him afraid we'd take too much for granted
And so our spirits must be lightly checked.

Blessed be down-to-earth! Blessed be highs!
Blessed be the detachment of dumb love
In that broad-backed, low-set man
Who feared debt all his life, but now and then
Could make a splash like the salmon he said was
"As big as a wee pork pig by the sound of it."

II
In earshot of the pool where that salmon jumped
Back through its own unheard concentric soundwaves
A mower leans forever on his scythe.
He has mown himself to the centre of the field
And stands in a final perfect ring
Of sunlit stubble.

"Go and tell your father," the mower says
(He said it to my father who told me)
"I have it mowed as clean as a new sixpence."

My father is a barefoot boy with news,
Running at eye-level with weeds and stooks
On the afternoon of his own father's death.

The open, black half of the half-door waits.
I feel much heat and hurry in the air.
I feel his legs and quick heels far away

And strange as my own–when he will piggyback me
At a great height, light-headed and thin-boned,
Like a witless elder rescued from the fire.

—Seamus Heaney



For Three Days

For three days now I've been trying to think of another
    word for gratitude
because my brother could have died and didn't,

because for a week we stood in the intensive care unit
    trying not to imagine
how it would be then, afterwards.

My youngest brother Andy said: *This is so weird. I
    don't know if I'll be
talking with John today or buying a pair of pants for
    his funeral*,

and I hated him for saying it because it was true and
    seemed to tilt it,
because I had been writing his elegy in my head
    during the seven hour drive there

and trying not to. Thinking meant not thinking. It
    meant imagining my brother
surrounded by light, like "Schrödinger's Cat" that
    would be dead if you looked

and might live if you didn't. And then it got better,
    and then it got worse.
And it's a story now. He came back.

And I did, by that time, imagine him dead. And I did
    begin to write the other story:
how the crowd in the stifling church snapped to a
    tearful attention,

how my brother lived again, for a few minutes, through
    me.
And although I know I couldn't help it, because fear
    has its own language

and its own story, because even grief provides a living
    remedy,
I can't help but think of that woman who said to him
    whom she considered her savior:

If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, how
    she might have practiced
her speech, and how she too might have stood
    trembling,

unable to meet the eyes of the dear familiar figure that
    stumbled from the cave,
when the compassionate fist of God opened and
    crushed her with gratitude and shame.

—Marie Howe

Holding On

—So, one by one I pull the lice from your red hair.
One by one I try to split them with my fingernails;

no use, they hold on
as they were taught to. Still, they glisten
like heavenly sparks in the morning light
of the bathroom.

I have to pull extra hard on many of them,
use the turquoise, fine-toothed comb
provided by the pharmacy.
They hold on with all their strength:
each has its individual hair to love,
each pus-colored creature
has a genius plan for not leaving you.

I fling the lice out in the air,
thinking how the world despises them,
the other mothers of Berkeley,
and the teachers who have not appreciated their beauty.

And though I've had to poison them again,
I've always understood them,
I also wanted to get that close,
wanted to cling to you in just that manner,
even go back to heaven with you so we won't
have to address this problem of the separate you-and-me,
of outer and inner.

I hope we will have our same bodies there
and the lice will have their same bodies,
that each hopeful tear-shaped egg
will be allowed to cling forever, not be pulled
between love's destiny
and a lesser freedom—

—Brenda Hillman



Poland of Death (IV)

1.

It is the duty of every man,
And woman, to write the life of the mother.
But the life of the father is written by
The father alone.—Now he is of great size
In Poland of Death, and his garment is sewn
Of superior cloth. I came upon him down
An alley of that place, sitting on a wall,
At the intersection of two walls, looking wise:
Known there as Louis of Minneapolis,
The *maître à pensée* of the necropolis.
And his song was, "When the deep purple falls. . . . "

2.

As I came up, he cast me a sharp glance
And stopped short at the middle of the verse
("Sleepy garden walls. . .")—meaning," This is
Your last chance to say something." "Say something!"
"How do you like my suit?" And so I say
To him, "You looked better naked and small."
And he says, "What's given here can never be
Refused, or lost. That's the rule. Take this nail!"
Then he started an old song I didn't like
At all. Something of the "matter of the race"—
At very least the long and sonorous breath

3.

Of a dark language.—O Poland of Death!
I asked a beggar-woman of the cemetery
What he sang, the young one smelling of sea
And milk who sweeps the sill. "Louis," she replies,
"Is a proud Jew now, dwelling among the dead,
A big Rabbi of rats dressed in a suit
That fits. A prince!" And then—before my eyes—
On the vapors of the universe—the head
of Louis hung—like Brutus, the conspirator;
And its song poured back centuries of rain
From the Etruscan jar of an old man's voice.

4.

Into the water-wells of the abyss:
"Now I know everything," it sang, "being in
The right place!—How did I get so wise?
When I proceeded Doctor of Philosophy
Torches smoked and flamed from every tower.
(Let the flame leap up, the heart ignite and burn!)
The celebrations of commencement were elaborate,

And I was clothed then, as you see me now,
In a suit that fits, sewn of superior cloth,
Invulnerable to the rust, the moth,
And the diurnal changes of the light

5.

In the open air. My boy, the truth is great."
"Louis," I cried, "Soon I am going to die.
The world is nearing its end. Say something
I can understand! So he pulled out a beret
Of reddish brown, put it on his head, and smiled
Like a prince, as the woman said, or king—
(Of grave-diggers, as it seems, or wolves or jews).
And I heard, then, the father calling to the son
And the son responding to the father from afar,
And the daughter to the mother, and the mother
To the children—voices like falling water,

6.

Or the shadow of swans, the sigh of the swan's feather:
After a thousand years the Devil will be loosed
On a day, and in the morning of that day
This Louis will ride forth in his 1950
Chevrolet of prophecy—with feet, hands,
And four on the floor (Ezekial I).
And the Rektor of the University
The Archbishop, the Lord Mayor and the General
Of Artillery, will applaud his face
And he will meet the host in the air,
Igniting the *auto-da-fé* of the sun."

7.

But all I understood, in fact, was the next phrase
On of the song he was singing as he sat
At the intersection (you will remember it)
Of two walls, "When the deep purple falls."
This time he got as far as the "nightingales."
Then stopped, and shouted, "This is the story
Of my life. I am the Professor now
Bigger than the Lord God. *He* was seduced
And made the world against His will—by art.
My son, I never married. I have no children.
I was smart. My father was a butcher, an empiricist

8.

Who knew the Law. (And that explains, in case
You want to *know,* why I hate cats! . . .)
When the end comes, like a dark wife at last,
It will be among the nightingales and rats
Of the necropolis, as the 'purple' falls
On Poland of Death." He turned his face, then,
And stopped his voice, never to speak again.
The Etruscan jar rang. I said to him: "Louis
I will sing you a new song." And the abyss
Supplied its word, Halleluya!" *Praise*
The Lord. Then the beggar-woman of the cemetery

9.

Saw her chance, and gave the old man on the wall
A proper kiss. For what? For being wise,
And (after all) unmarried, and for dressing well.
Happy, happy Louis! The new song was this:
"Father, not father, *O roi magicien!*
Mother, not mother, O name of Beatrice!
Does the cloth forget the weaver, does the field
Of millet in its season no longer remember the sower,
Or the birds that feed on it honor in later summer
The labor that laid it down? O Yes! And the pot
The woman's hand who made it has forgot.

10.

How much less the mind, reading and running hard,
Touches the world. (O touch me, *roi thaumaturge!*)
Therefore, Louis of Minneapolis at ease upon a wall,
Sucking on a nail—the Jew in charge—
Demands a word when the deep purple falls.
What do I hear? An audible air of voices
Calling out and answering: '*Au revoir,*
Ma femme chère," *Mon frère,*' '*Ma soeur,*' '*Mon père.*'
What do I see? Poland of Death! Louis driven out
(The Doctor in his garment of superior cloth)
Into the field behind the wall and shot!

11.

'What is the past?' 'What passes?' 'What is to come
When I have died?' . . . *What is to come?* No figure
Has it yet, no form.—Night falls in a room.
Someone in the dark is scratching with a nail:
The chronicler. Upon the road to the necropolis
Approaches always the chrome of battlecars,
Convertibles in columns like descended stars.
What is the past?—Night falls in a room. A king
Gives laws in the abyss on a drowned throne.
What passes?—The *auto-da-fé* of the sun.
What is the WORD? Halleluya. The Lord is ONE."

—Allen Grossman

What He Thought

We were supposed to do a job in Italy
and, full of our feeling for
ourselves (and our sense of being
poets from America) we went
from Rome to Fano, met
the mayor, mulled
a couple matters over (how to say
cheap date, we wondered, how to say
flat drink). Among Italian literati

we could recognize our counterparts:
the academic, the apologist, the arrogant, the amorous,
the brazen and the glib—and one unequalled
administrator, the conservative, in suit
of regulation gray, who like a good tour guide
with measured pace and uninflected tone narrated
sights and histories the hired van hauled
us past. Of all he was

most politic and least
poetic, so it seemed; he was a little easy
to despise. Our last few days in Rome, when all but
three
of the New World bards had flown, I found
his book of poems in my pensione room (a room he'd
recommended), where it must have been abandoned by
the German visitor (was there a bus of *them*?) to whom
he had inscribed it just a month before.
We last Americans were due

to leave tomorrow. For our parting
evening then, our perfectly
unprepossessing host chose
something in a family restaurant.
And there we sat and chatted, sat
and chewed; till, sensible it was our last
big chance to be poetic, make our mark, one of us
asked

"What's poetry? Is it the fruits and vegetables and
marketplace of Campo dei Fiori, or
the statue of the martyr there?"
Because I was the glib
one, I identified
the answer instantly, I didn't have
to think. The truth
is both, it's both, I said. But that

was easy. That was easiest to say. What followed
taught me something about difficulty,
for the dull one spoke,
in his accustomed measures,
clear and even, and he said:
The statue represents Giordano Bruno, who
was brought to be burned in the public square
because of an offense against
authority, which is to say
the church. His crime was his belief
the universe does not revolve around
the human being, God
is no fixed point or central
government, but rather
is poured in waves through all things. All
things move. "If God is not the soul
itself, He is
the soul of the soul
of the world": such was
his heresy. The day they brought him
forth to death, fearing he might
incite the crowd (the man was famous
for his eloquence) his captors placed

upon his face
an iron mask in which
he could not speak. That's
how they burned him. That
is how he died: without a word,
in front of everyone. And poetry—
(we'd all
put down our forks by now, to listen to
the man in gray; he went on
softly)—
poetry is what
he thought, but did not say.

—Heather McHugh



A Dream of Mind: History, Spines

I have escaped in a dream, I was at peril, in danger, at immediate, furious, frightening risk,
but I neatly evaded the risk, deftly eluded the danger, I conned peril to think I'd gone that way,
then I went this, then this way again, over the bridges of innocence, into the haven of obliviousness.
I was so shrewd in my moment of risk, efficient, cool: I was as guileful as though I were guilty,
as devious as the damned, though I'd done nothing in truth but be who I was where I was
when the dream conceived me as a power I wasn't, possessed of a threatening force I'd never had,
though I had found enough force to flee and the guileful wherewithal to dodge, elude, and be free.
I have escaped, survived, but as soon as I think it it starts again, I'm harried again, hounded,
no innocence now, no unlikeliest way, only this frenzied combing of the countries of mind
where I always believed I'd find safety and solace but where now reign confusion and fear
and a turmoil so total that all I have known or might know flows through me to chaos again.
That, in this space I inhabit, something fearsome is happening, inexorably, with awful momentum,
is never in doubt, but that's all I can know—no way even to tell if I'm victim or oppressor;
absurd after all this not to know if you're subject or object, scapegoat, perpetrator or prey.
The dream is of beings like me, assembled, surrounded, herded like creatures, driven, undone.
And beings like me, not more like me but like me, assemble and herd them, us, undo us.
No escape now, no survival: captured, subjugated, undone, we all move through dreams of negation.
Subject, object, dream doesn't care; accumulate or subtract, self as solace, self as blame.
Thou shalt, thou shalt not; thus do I, thus I do not: the dream is indifferent, bemused, abstracted.
Formulation, abstraction; assembly, removal: the dream detached; exaltation, execration, denial.

—C. K. Williams

From a Sequence

3. *Birches*

I see it is with you as with the birches:
I am not to speak to you
in the personal way. Much
has passed between us. Or
was it always only
on the one side? I am
at fault, at fault, I asked you
to be human—I am no needier
than other people. But the absence
of all feeling, of the least
concern for me—I might as well go on
addressing the birches,
as in my former life: let them
do their worst, let them
bury me with the Romantics,
their pointed yellow leaves
falling and covering me.

14. *Parousia*

Love of my life, you
are lost and I am
young again.

A few years pass.
The air fills
with girlish music;
in the front yard
the apple tree is
studded with blossoms.

I try to win you back,
that is the point
of the writing.
But you are gone forever,
as in Russian novels, saying
a few words I don't remember—

How lush the world is,
how full of things that don't belong to me—

I watch the blossoms shatter,
no longer pink,
but old, old, a yellowish white—
the petals seem
to float on the bright grass,
fluttering slightly.

What a nothing you were,
to be changed so quickly
into an image, an odor—
you are everywhere, source
of wisdom and anguish.

—Louise Glück

(Continued on p. 85)

BOOK REVIEW

Power in the Groin

Bonnie Smith

Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud by Thomas Laqueur. Harvard University Press, 1990, 313 pp.

Here is a vignette from *Making Sex*. Young women in the sixteenth century feared jumping and stretching their legs too far lest they turn into men. This fear stemmed from actual cases. Marie Garnier, a French farm girl, jumped a ditch while chasing the family pigs and suddenly acquired male genitalia. No less an authority than Michel de Montaigne reported that the leap had weakened Marie's ligaments, which held her female genitals in place. But because female genitals were merely inverted male ones—or so people had believed since antiquity—the blow turned Marie's insides out, thereby reversing her gender. The tale tested no one's credulity, and Marie legally took the name Germain Garnier and ultimately became a servant at the royal court. From an abundance of such stories, Thomas Laqueur engagingly constructs for his readers a hitherto unbelievable hypothesis: before, roughly, the eighteenth century, scientists, philosophers, and social commentators believed in a one-sex model of the human body.

These authorities, for instance, had no word for the vagina because they believed it to be merely an inversion of the penis. Until the eighteenth century, the word "testicle" was always modified as either masculine or feminine, the ovaries serving as an internal counterpart to masculine gonads. *Making Sex* abounds in visual evidence of these beliefs as represented in premodern medical drawings, which faithfully render all female genitalia as internal counterparts to what was external in men.

According to Laqueur, already established belief in the greater perfection of men determined the ways people explained, portrayed, and even saw anatomy or "sex." Since they ascribed higher social and ontological stature to themselves, men appeared in the medical record as physiologically warmer and more active than women. Thus they had external genitals. Women, as less deserving and colder creatures, wore the same genitals inside—and inside out. Social definitions of masculinity and femininity, argues Laqueur, preceded a biological understanding of sex, not the other way around. Or, as Laqueur has the ancients inverting Freud, "destiny was anatomy."

The one-sex model produced a surprising attitude toward sexuality. Conception, everyone believed, took place only if both men and women experienced orgasm during intercourse. Both, it was thought, ejaculated a substance necessary to pregnancy. Even after surmising the existence of the egg, eighteenth-century scientists maintained that it was only released in the midst of sexual delight. Thus, the one-sex model can, retrospectively, be seen as protofeminist: it allowed women bodily pleasure rather than restricting it. However, lest we become nostalgic, Laqueur occasionally reminds us that the model for the singly sexed body was always male.

It was precisely the evidence of female orgasm in works of early modern medicine that persuaded Laqueur to embark on this fascinating project. A professor of history at UC Berkeley, Laqueur was originally familiar only with stories of the "nice" women of nineteenth-century England who weren't supposed to have sexual feelings. He was stunned to find a far different attitude prior to the eighteenth century, when doctors wrote incessantly about how to stimulate women so that they could conceive. Taking up the search for the disappearing female orgasm, Laqueur found himself trying to understand "the nature of sexual difference generally."

The perceived necessity of female orgasm waned in the eighteenth century when scientists, doctors, and other social commentators developed the two-sex model we still follow today. Where the earlier one-sex model maintained that men's and women's genitalia were similar, the two-sex model found only difference. Contemporary terms like "vagina" were invented, and the portrayal of the female body acquired a more "realistic" appearance. Scientists gradually came to understand spontaneous ovulation and many other physiological processes. But Laqueur warns us not to attribute such changes to the inexorable march of medical science. Not only did aspects of the one-sex model persist; the two-sex model was, like its predecessor, largely determined by social beliefs. In fact, everyone was changing their social vision just as the two-sex model was gaining credence. The French *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasized differences between the sexes more than similarities. Piqued by the intellectual influence of Parisian women who ran *salons,* Rousseau wrote best-selling novels encouraging separate spheres for men and women. In 1792, the English radical Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women needed to be educated in order to fulfill their special duties, especially the nurturing of children to be virtuous citizens.

According to Laqueur, the relegation of women to the home increasingly took its justification from the

Bonnie Smith teaches history at Rutgers University. She is the author of Changing Lives: Women in European History from 1700 *(D.C. Heath, 1989).*

body. Viewing male and female bodies as dissimilar, scientists "discovered" details of feminine difference that thrilled men of letters. For instance, doctors no longer believed that menstrual blood was a variant of bodily fluids common to men and women that could metamorphose into milk and other substances. Instead, from the eighteenth century on, they scrutinized the menstrual cycle of women as a natural process unto itself. No longer finding commonalities with men, researchers compared menstruation with the estrous cycle of female animals. Subsequently the French historian Jules Michelet rhapsodized about women's monthly "wound" and—no less than doctors—built an entire theory of the female personality around it. It maintained that women's monthly incapacity demanded solicitude from men and a renewal of chivalric behavior to protect the weaker sex.

Whenever social issues were at stake, Laqueur argues, the female body was wheeled out to determine the verdict on what was or was not appropriate for women. Not only men of science but men in general invoked the nature of the female body to support their social privilege. Laqueur attributes this to struggles for power among men and women that particularly erupted during the drive for equality and social change associated with the democratic revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, but more generally throughout modern history. Men, aiming at political and social superiority, for some less-than-clear reason came up with the two-sex model of the body and proclaimed women's difference.

Although *Making Sex* does illustrate the body's evolving fate, Lacqueur only weakly explains the birth of the two-sex model as part of a male attempt to gain power over women. Was there not always a contest going on? Had men lost so much power in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that they needed completely to recast the relationship of the sexes? Why, moreover, was the body *the* major pawn in the struggle? In all events, Laqueur does not provide a compelling explanation of the rise of the two-sex model. He hazards some interesting assertions about the model's appearance during the French Revolution and explores the theme of sexual difference in the work of some important thinkers such as Rousseau, Michelet, and Freud. But his case studies seem to be chosen at random and lack the kind of clarity he exhibits in discussing the one-sex model.

Here a little history can help to anchor Laqueur's claims. When the two-sex model developed, never had European population growth been so out of control, soaring as the eighteenth century ended and continuing to grow dramatically thereafter. The beginnings of industry and improvements in agriculture and commerce occurred alongside an increase in longevity. At the same time, the bonds of family and village were stretched, and sometimes broken, by the force of demographic and economic change. But it was precisely within these bonds that marriages were arranged and reproductive customs—such as one's age at marriage—fixed. Instead of remaining in the family's embrace, children left farms that could no longer support them for cities and new commercial towns. The patriarchal family and the traditional community had once ensured that agricultural production would be coordinated with reproduction of the species. But now the family could no longer perform this task. The micromanagement that had always kept these two ingredients of civilization in balance no longer worked in the world of commercial agriculture, industrial development, and the nation-state. As a result, the gender relations of reproduction were as much up for redefinition as were the social relations of productivity. With population out of control, the so-called age of revolution was not just political and economic; it was reproductive, a matter of sex and gender.

The enactment of gendered, social roles—what Laqueur calls "destiny"—thus occurred according to fluctuating national and demographic needs. Instead of hermetic communities or extended families determining their roles, each individual body in accord with the findings of doctors and social theorists would need to behave appropriately as the circumstances demanded. Thus the premodern one-sex model became inverted: sexual anatomy allowed destiny itself to be managed. The gender roles of mother, career woman, sex kitten, and so on could all be read from the body depending on the state of reproductive technology and the demographic situation of a given society. In the 1960s, after the baby boom had replenished the population, birth control was legalized in most western societies, and women adopted more varied roles.

As for men's bodies, they too could be summoned to serve as fathers and providers, warriors or playboys. But we still know far less about how they were managed and about the ingredients of masculine power in the new order, where anatomy was destiny. Did, for instance, the scientific privilege of doctors to scrutinize and judge women's bodies spread to men across the social spectrum? How did science come to set new terms for a reproductive economy and at the same time empower men as a whole? Laqueur examines perceptions of the female body but never questions depictions of the male. Rather, he assumes that the one-sex model had a transparent meaning somehow related to beliefs in masculine superiority. Nor when it comes to the two-sex model do we get much of a picture of what is happening on the male side of things. Menstruation, ovulation, and female hysteria receive a great deal of attention as the loci of difference. But what did it mean that the male body was, conversely, assumed to be the locus of identity? Laqueur's book thus solidifies and reaffirms the universality of masculinity, which is so naturally hegemonic that one doesn't think to write about it. To prove a point, *cherchez la femme.*

By continuing to regard masculine power as unproblematic, *Making Sex* does not completely fulfill its ambition to understand "sexual difference generally." At times it even reads like yet one more doctor's look at women's bodies—Laqueur is, in fact, the son and grandson of physicians and a one-time medical student himself—in scrutinizing and describing them as sheer difference.

We are at the point where the mere assertion, often and sympathetically made by Laqueur, that the two-sex model was a power play by men just does not suffice. In the final analysis, most readers will be engaged by the novel thesis offered in *Making Sex.* But some will find that the masculine power inherent in the modern discourse of two sexes is naturalized once more by science (this time historical science), untroubled, ultimately, and perhaps inevitably reinforced. □

FILM REVIEW

Jonathan Demme and the Aesthetics of Contempt

Chris Lehmann

Late in the dismal winter of 1991, as America gradually resigned itself to the prospect of war in the Middle East, the nation's movie-going public found itself the subject of another ominous campaign. Dark, enigmatic images began to crop up on billboards and buses, in subway stations and theaters. A menacing pair of eyes starkly loomed out of a gaunt and pallid face—sometimes male, sometimes female, but always vaguely maniacal and hauntingly Orwellian in appearance. The face was framed by a black background; where a mouth should have been, there was a Death's Head moth—whose markings upon inspection turned out to be an eerie tangle of exposed human bodies, locked in a torturous embrace. This grim creature provided the only splash of color in an otherwise unrelieved study in ambient gloom. Apart, that is, from the title of the film being advertised, set in a bright orange-red and steeped just as deeply in enigma and implied doom: The Silence of the Lambs.

The significance of this vision would not be long lost on moviegoers. Directed by the talented and trend-conscious filmmaker Jonathan Demme, *The Silence of the Lambs* soon became the top-grossing film in the country. Thomas Harris's novel of the same name, which had only dented the bestseller list when first published in 1988, now stormed to the top of the paperback list. Tabloids and lurid TV "shock news" segments breathlessly touted this or that discovery of "a real-life Silence of the Lambs."

Amid all this frenzied attention, *The Silence of the Lambs* was also being hailed as a breakthrough for Jonathan Demme, long adored by critics but largely ignored in the marketplace. The film is indeed a breakthrough, but far from the sort that we have cause to celebrate. *The Silence of the Lambs* is in many ways the culmination of a set of nasty obsessions that have taken shape not only within the work of Jonathan Demme, but in American culture at large during the time that Demme has reworked and refined his cinematic vision. The film's peculiar brutality and ugliness are a triumphant statement of the postmodern aesthetic, boasting the full repertoire of that aesthetic's themes and techniques: stylish, disorienting cinematography; flat and ideologically stunted characterizations; a morbid fascination with the repressed "dark side" beneath the surface of everyday life; a studied emotional coldness verging on paranoia. Most strikingly, however, *The Silence of the Lambs*, like Demme's other recent work and the work of scores of other purveyors of the postmodern, resounds with a calculated politics of cultural self-congratulation and class insulation. Indeed, it does not seem too farfetched to suggest that Demme's embrace of this aesthetic has grown apace with the ever more greed-blighted and life-denying character of contemporary American culture. To better understand this process, we need to consider more closely how Demme—and the rest of us—have gotten to where we are today.

Demme began his career with a tour of duty as a director of low-budget exploitation films—such as the women's prison movie *Caged Heat* (1974) and *Citizen's Band* (1977), a surprisingly imaginative film treatment of a pop culture fad. He made his debut as a "serious" filmmaker with *Melvin and Howard* (1980), a current-events-as-fable retelling of the legal controversy over the will of billionaire hermit Howard Hughes. *Melvin and Howard* was a sympathetic but unsentimental meditation on the fate of the American dream. Set mainly in Nevada and Utah—each state an archetypal site for a vision of America—the film traces the hapless career of Melvin Dummars (Paul LeMat) as he tries to recast himself into various plebeian versions of the self-made man. He puts in time as a truck driver, mechanic, milkman, and gas station attendant, while spending his spare time tinkering with inventions and ill-conceived get-rich-quick schemes. As debts accrue and desperation mounts, Melvin's long-suffering family gets a foretaste of the promised land when Melvin's wife Lynda comes away the big winner in a TV game show.

In a sort of moral symmetry worthy of Greek tragedy, Melvin's family sinks once more, and irretrievably, into debt as Melvin squanders the game-show winnings on the gaudy status symbols of latter-day American achievement: a boat-sized car, a house-sized boat, and a barracks-sized suburban ranch house. Meanwhile Melvin's family—the object of his errant economic heroism—disintegrates: his wife leaves with the children, unable to endure another round of mortgages and repossessions. The message here was unmistakable, yet oddly courageous for a modern Hollywood film: the kind of America dreamt of on game shows and in Las Vegas is a delusionary vision of easy money and lapsed self-restraint, capable of dragging down even a fundamentally innocuous dreamer like

Chris Lehmann is assistant editor of Tikkun.

Melvin Dummars. Because the cash is unreal, conjured out of a random configuration of chance and spectacle, so too are its consequences; easy money impairs the possessor's very sense of reality, tempting Melvin to abjure work for vapid leisure, and to sacrifice family to status display. It was an admirably clear-headed message for an America that had not yet sunk into the unlicensed pillage of the Reagan years. Indeed, in the wake of the energy crises and lingering "stagflation" of the mid-seventies, the country was wrestling for perhaps the first time in its history with the notion of finite resources and limited economic growth—a notion now long and almost hysterically repressed in a political culture that never tires of congratulating itself for emerging out of its "national malaise."

Remarkably, *Melvin and Howard*'s preoccupation with these inglorious moral questions was so compelling that the film's claim to topical interest—the much-litigated, dubiously authentic Howard Hughes will—receded into the background, as a virtual afterthought to Melvin's tribulations. Indeed, the character of Hughes—a representative of the ethos of easy money if there ever was one—appears as a ghostly, pathetic figure, staggering helplessly through the Nevada desert when Melvin happens upon him. By the time Melvin gets his day in court, the film has already made its central narrative point: that Melvin and Howard are both dreamers, and victims, of the same dream.

Perhaps Demme sought to achieve much the same effect in his next feature *Swing Shift* (1984). It is impossible to tell, since the producers of the film—reportedly at the behest of star Goldie Hawn—edited it down into a shapeless mess. All that is recognizably Demme's is an auspicious choice of subject—the mobilization of women into the workforce during World War II. In place of the assured, sympathetic understanding of the lives of working people that made *Melvin and Howard* so remarkable, there were lingering close-ups of Goldie Hawn. Where there might have been path-breaking forays into the unexplored territory of gender and factory work, there was a plodding, conventional love triangle.

Always a prolific talent, Demme bounced back quickly from the debacle of *Swing Shift* with a well-received concert film, 1984's *Stop Making Sense,* featuring the new-wave band Talking Heads. This abrupt shift in subject matter suggested that the lesson he had drawn from *Swing Shift* was that the neo-populist themes of his earlier films would never play in Hollywood; better instead to cultivate the more discerning tastes of the emerging postmodern cultural elite. This lesson was unmistakably the guiding principle of Demme's next dramatic feature, *Something Wild* (1986), a film scarcely recognizable as the work of the same director. It was as though Frank Capra had stepped into a time machine and had come out as Andy Warhol. *Something Wild* was little more than a romantic road film, which captivated critics and hip urban audiences with a characteristically eighties twist on the genre: a free-wheeling, hedonistic love affair culminates in assault, kidnapping, and violent death. A new-wave waif named Lulu (played by Melanie Griffith), seduces and abducts a button-down corporate executive with the prototypically nerdy name of Charlie Driggs (Jeff Daniels). Gradually Lulu indoctrinates Charlie into the erotic and cultural pleasures of living on the eighties edge: petty theft, sado-masochistic sex, and an ironically tinged fashion sense. Finally, their madcap affair requires the sacrifice of Lulu's husband Ray, a lower-class hood whom Charlie stabs to death. (Ray, it should be noted, was an early example of what would become a stock figure of postmodern melodrama: the amoral lumpen hustler, who provides yuppie audiences a safely titillating symbol of the "dark side" of human nature and American life.)

Beneath the prodigious surface of the film's plot, however, Demme was sending another, more insidious message to his hip admirers. The problem of postmodern identity that Charlie and Lulu solve by their bloody union is not simply a question of moral temptation, but of racial voyeurism. This is made clear from the film's outset, when the opening credit sequence—a long pan of various Manhattan skylines accompanied by



Agent Starling and the evil Dr. Lecter examine the dark heart of America.

the appropriated Caribbean rhythms of a David Byrne theme song—resolves into a close-up of a black teenager standing at a street corner, hoisting a boom box on his shoulder, just as Demme's director's credit appears on screen.

True to his trope, Demme poses throughout the film as a trendy impresario of black and Third World cultures. Through scores of similar visual cues, he weaves a fairly blatant cultural subtext into the film—one that, like the movie's foreshortened moral universe, is calculated to congratulate the audience for its sensibilities. When Charlie first meets up with Lulu, she is a veritable walking pastiche of ethnic cultural correctness. Her black attire is highlighted by Latin American jewelry and a map-of-Africa necklace rendered in the colors of the ANC; in case her fashion sense left any doubt, she is sitting in a Caribbean restaurant, reading a biography of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo beneath a poster commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. And at virtually every key moment of the film, Demme frames the action with carefully choreographed demonstrations of soul on the part of black extras.

As a result, the film boasts every sort of earthy stereotype of black experience that can be imagined: there is a humble Southern Baptist church, replete with impassioned exhortations

and soulful gospel choir; a hip-hop chorus of black teenage rappers; even a grizzled old bluesman blowing mournfully into a harmonica. Finally, a lengthy closing credit sequence has a Jamaican waitress from Charlie and Lulu's Caribbean restaurant, regaling the audience with an extended reggae toast, as though in token of a cultural breakthrough.

The stagnant and morally deranged backwaters of American society can be redeemed only at the behest of young professionals, and federal law-enforcement professionals at that.

Token is indeed the word. For all these jumbled, reverent images—which, in keeping with the postmodern politics of representation, are clearly intended to be a "progressive" statement—have the effect of patronizing the kind of cultures the movie seeks to celebrate. In part, this is a simple function of Demme's decision not to use black characters as anything but extras; his embrace of the avant-garde clearly hasn't prevented him from retaining one of Hollywood's most enduring reactionary conventions. But on a different level, the sheer, vast scope of the ethnic traditions being continuously quoted flattens out their discrete character; if, say, the Southern bluesman and the hip-hop teenagers were actual characters rather than atmospheric caricatures, they would overlap in more interesting and complicated ways. But in the world of *Something Wild,* all oppressed peoples are equally soulful, and equally effective agents of yuppie cultural rejuvenation. Indeed, this indiscriminate set of cultural cues resembles nothing so much as the postmodern urban marketplace, which is precisely where the politics of *Something Wild* begin and end. (And indeed it is where such politics continue to thrive: Bud Light now uses the movie's Jamaican-waitress theme music in a TV spot that features an all-white beach party.)

There is, of course, a corollary political vision behind this mighty effort to subsume racial identity to class privilege. What makes all these vicarious excursions into black and ethnic culture necessary is a thoroughgoing contempt for the drab and provincial lives of ordinary Americans, who are considerably less gifted in matters of taste and disposable income. In their travels, Charlie and Lulu descend upon Lulu's small hometown in Pennsylvania. They stay with Lulu's mother, who lives in a house that is a virtual museum of the late Middle-American Grotesque, cluttered with tasteless curios, kitsch religious paintings, and white porch swings. In perhaps the film's most revealing moment, Charlie and Lulu visit Lulu's ten-year high school reunion. Suddenly surrounded by the fatuous middle managers and catty suburban matriarchs of his heritage, Charlie seems dangerously close to reverting to form; but Lulu lures him back. Her victory is sealed when Charlie preserves the integrity of his lifestyle choice by closely mimicking the moves of a black couple on the reunion dance floor.

All this was an astonishing about-face for the director who gave us the unapologetic, populist morality play of *Melvin and Howard.* But like the earlier film, *Something Wild* was very much a product of its time, the latter half of the 1980s, when the urban professional class could plunder junk-bond portfolios and Third World cultural traditions with equal aplomb. Indeed, Demme's revamped aesthetic was so congenial to the times that critics entirely missed the film's ideological pairing of an almost desperate cultural exoticism and a pronounced class antagonism. Both themes were such self-evident articles of faith in the popular culture of the late nineteen eighties that they were rendered virtually invisible to criticism. Instead, Demme's admirers praised *Something Wild* for being exactly what it wasn't: a "quirky," "affectionate," or even "subversive" celebration of America's multi-ethnic character and troubled moral identity.

Such critical plaudits, like the film itself, were exercises in cultural self-congratulation, borne of the luxury of surveying the American scene from above, and carefully selecting out those traits that complemented the tastes, self-image, and spending power of an ascendant cultural elite. And significantly, two other influential, widely hailed films released at roughly the same time as *Something Wild*—Martin Scorsese's *After Hours* and David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*—worked the same narrow cultural terrain of the exotic American "dark side" and an ever shriller class-based contempt for middle America. All self-assured, skillfully assembled cinematic statements, the three films formed something of a manifesto for a new class's coming-of-age into a world where it could confidently (and comfortably) set the terms of cultural and moral debate. As yuppies took up residence in cosmopolitan enclaves of urban privilege, they found it a necessary entertainment to heap contempt on the cultural backwardness of the unwashed, nonprofessional residents of "middle America"—and meanwhile to portray themselves as cutting-edge citizens of the postmodern global village.

Demme went on to contribute two more films to this emerging eighties genre. *Swimming to Cambodia* (1987) was another concert film, a stylized rendering of a monologue by actor/performance artist Spalding Gray. Gray's monologue fit in perfectly with the genre's conventions; it managed to pose as an intimate, first-person meditation on the ghastly consequences of Western imperialism in the Far East while recasting much of the logic of imperialism as latter-day cultural tourism. Thus, Gray spoke glowingly of the pre–Khmer Rouge Cambodians as a people who "knew how to have a good time" (and in keeping with the emerging postmodern consensus on the country's "dark side," ominously evoked the very idea of America as something that gave him "the cold sweats"). Gray's wide-eyed evocation of the genocidal atrocities of Pol Pot's regime was blithely juxtaposed with accounts of Gray's sybaritic search for "a perfect moment," and of the painful rigors of acting with a hangover. Like the obtrusive ethnic tableaus of *Something Wild,* Gray resolutely trivialized the politics he tried to preach by

turning it into a sort of travelogue-homage to his own worldliness and cultural sophistication. Demme's next film, *Married to the Mob* (1988), meanwhile, merely tried to revive the *Something Wild* formula in the form of a slight screwball comedy.

With *The Silence of the Lambs*, however, it appears that Demme has broken form with the themes of his other recent works. The film offers no vision of cultural rejuvenation or vicarious ethnic escape; it is, rather, a headlong plunge into "the dark side," suffused with a sense of utter psychic anarchy and claustrophobic dread. *The Silence of the Lambs* is a lurid, disturbing descent into an inferno of thwarted psychosexual desire, wallowing in every sort of transgression and taboo, from dismemberment and cannibalism to transsexualism and torture.

Jodie Foster portrays a neophyte FBI agent named Clarice Starling, sent out on a maiden assignment to help track down a deranged serial killer ("Buffalo Bill") who strips his victims—all of whom are women—of their skins after he has murdered them. For reasons that are entirely obscure, young Clarice must enlist the aid of one Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), an improbable psychologist turned cannibal, possessed of psychoanalytic brilliance and unspeakable urges. Lecter seems to exist chiefly (like Lulu's husband Ray in *Something Wild*) to symbolize Clarice's link to the dark psychological netherworld of Buffalo Bill; in a series of interviews with Clarice, Lecter reverts to psychoanalytic form, coaxing long-buried fears and childhood memories out of her unconscious.

One might well expect that America's self-appointed guardians of culture and ideology would chafe at *The Silence of the Lambs*. From the standpoint of simple decency, let alone the pet special interests of the fundamentalist Right and the semiotic Left, it's appalling stuff, exploiting many of the worst conventions of film making: the jaded accumulation of shock effects for their own sake; the enlistment of the audience as titillated voyeurs; the relentless paring down of human nature into the urge to maim and dominate.

But these are long-familiar excesses in mainstream movies, and so have attracted little critical attention. Instead, debate over *The Silence of the Lambs* has (doubtless to Demme's surprise) revolved around the movie's sexual politics. A panel of critics and activists in the *Village Voice,* as well as writers in *Outweek* and (of all places) *Mademoiselle,* have all argued heatedly over the film's treatment of women and its allegedly homophobic characterization of Buffalo Bill.

These questions of sex, however, are not finally what is so striking about the politics of *The Silence of the Lambs*. Critics on the Left have rigorously scrutinized and debated the fidelity of Demme's film to the Harris novel in order to find telling ideological nuances of plot and characterization. But no commentator has noted Demme's most remarkable departure, in an otherwise remarkably faithful adaptation of Harris's book. This departure (scripted by Demme's screenwriter Ted Talley) shows the real politics of *The Silence of the Lambs* to be, in the spirit of its immediate predecessors in Demme's work, a politics of unlicensed contempt; and its ultimate horror is the urban professional's carefully cultivated horror of everyday life.

One simple but crucial scene in the book gives Clarice renewed momentum in her search for the killer and brings her motivation into sharp momentary focus. Gathering background for the case, Clarice investigates the apartment of Catherine Martin, a woman whom Buffalo Bill has abducted, and whose mother happens to be a U.S. senator. While going through Catherine's bedroom, Clarice discovers a set of illicit photographs hidden in the top of a jewelry box. The photographs show Catherine having sex with an unidentified man. Catherine's mother bursts in on Clarice and demands to have the photographs while managing to insinuate that Clarice is a thief. Here is how Harris has Clarice remembering this painful confrontation:

> Starling knew what the malicious Dr. Lecter would say, and it was true: she was afraid there was something tacky that Senator Martin saw in her, something cheap, something thieflike that Senator Martin reacted to. That Vanderbilt bitch.

By Harris's account, Clarice burns with "class resentment, the buried anger that comes with mother's milk." She is acutely conscious of being of poor Southern birth—"an isolated member of a fierce tribe with no formal genealogy but the honors list and the penal register." As she investigates Catherine's apartment, she cannot help but notice the well-appointed furnishings, the designer labels on Catherine's clothes, or the fact that Catherine owns twenty-three pairs of shoes.

In the novel Clarice's class sympathies inform even the most painful, intimate questions of why she is driven to seek out the killer. In Demme's film, Clarice seems to have an unquestioned, obsessive bond with Catherine, bound up with the twin notions of sisterhood and victimization. Demme coyly transmits this bond in the movie's soundtrack—when Catherine first appears on screen, a Tom Petty song blares from her car radio to let the audience know how it should view Catherine: as simply an "American Girl." Harris, though, has Clarice identifying not with Catherine, but with another of Buffalo Bill's victims, Kimberly Emberg, who like Clarice was a woman of lesser birth: "No senators looking out for her." "Fat dead Kimberly," Clarice reflects in the novel,

> who had her ears pierced trying to look pretty and saved to have her legs waxed.... Kimberly her sister. Starling did not think Catherine Baker Martin would have much time for Kimberly. Now they were sisters under the skin.

Rather than a rhetorical platform of gender politics, the idea of sisterhood appears here as paradox, reaching across the social distances that separate the three women. Clarice feels these distances so powerfully that she finds identifying with Catherine a discipline rather than a reflex: "Starling found it essential to like Catherine Martin because it helped her to bear down."

Demme does not merely omit the scene in Catherine's apartment that

fuels these complicated, class-bound tensions. Instead, he recasts the scene entirely, and transports it to a setting much more congenial to his cultural politics: the lower-middle-class bedroom of Buffalo Bill's first victim Fredrica Bimmel, in the small Midwestern city of Belvedere, Ohio. Demme frames the camera's approach to Fredrica's dilapidated house with the same contemptuous cultural cues that he played for such effect in *Something Wild*. There is a front yard full of wooden lawn geese, a free-standing kitsch windmill in the shape of an Indian chief. But as befits the subject in *The Silence of the Lambs,* there is also a strong suggestion of decrepitude and menace: a gratuitous close-up of a forlorn, fat old woman gazing absently out of an upper-story window; and Fredrica's father, a vacant-looking pigeon-keeper with a three-day growth of beard, a longshoreman's cap, and a distinct air of the bottle about him.

The adolescent fixtures of Fredrica's bedroom reproduce the impoverishment of her surroundings in miniature. Standard-issue rockstar posters on her walls compete with frilly-bordered graduation-style portraits of family and friends on her vanity. Clarice discovers the photographs not in a jewelry box, but in a music box that contains a delicate, pirouetting ballerina figure on a pedestal—symbolically crushed as Clarice reaches for the photographs. In front of the music box is the most damning cultural indictment of all: a Harlequin romance novel. The photographs themselves are not carnal at all—no one in a room like this could be vouchsafed a sex life—but simply humiliating: Fredrica mugging in her underwear in a botched, pathetic parody of eroticism, or slouching away from the camera as she displays her backside. Readers of Harris's novel would expect that Clarice in a scene like this would betray some sympathy for a sad, excluded character like Fredrica, desperately sacrificing self-respect to the craving for acceptance. But Demme has Clarice, ever the prepossessing professional, register the queasy disgust that the audience is clearly expected to feel. ("I do feel the things we put up in homes and workplaces tell what we care about," Demme said in a recent interview. "You want to engender certain things in the viewer through what you show.") And Clarice supplies the final gesture of outraged sensibility in a striking violation of both law-enforcement protocol and simple civility: she neither collects up the photographs as evidence nor discreetly replaces them in recognition of her intrusion, but flings them dismissively onto Fredrica's desk, where Fredrica's hapless, doddering father is sure to find them.

The ugliest message of The Silence of the Lambs *is that ordinary American life festers with all the necessary ingredients of psychosexual carnage: we are all Buffalo Bills waiting to happen.*

By the film's climactic showdown between Clarice and the killer, her disdain proves to be abundantly justified. For Buffalo Bill is also a resident of Belvedere, and he too serves as a symbol of middle-American depravity. Indeed Demme's trademark signifiers make it clear that Clarice's hunt for the killer is a journey into the dark heart of the country: as she begins tracking him through the squalid basement where he skins his victims and indulges his fantasies, Clarice is incongruously framed by a map of the eastern half of the U.S. hung on his wall. And when she finally guns him down, the camera cuts to a close-up of a miniature American flag perched on Buffalo Bill's basement window, feebly exposed to the light of day as the darkness of Buffalo Bill's horror-filled underground chamber is finally dispelled.

For all its lurid atrocities and sexual torment, then, the ugliest message of *The Silence of the Lambs* is that ordinary American life festers with all the necessary ingredients of psychosexual carnage: we are all Buffalo Bills waiting to happen. "When you're making a movie like this," Demme told the *Village Voice,* "you think about why this whole country is fucked up," citing a litany of everyday horrors such as child abuse, rape, and other crimes of "male dominance." This politics of glib condemnation, so consonant with the cultural agenda of the contemporary Left, uses the breadth of its indictment to blot out the particular, lived tensions and antagonisms of class—the sort of issues, ironically, that Demme displayed a unique feel for earlier in his career. In place of such tensions, we have the unchallenged assumptions of a culturally ascendant class. These assumptions point to a single, sweeping conclusion: the stagnant and morally deranged backwaters of American society can be redeemed only at the behest of young professionals, and federal law-enforcement professionals at that.

Demme's calculated restatements of these critical issues of class and culture have subtly informed the political debate that has taken shape over *The Silence of the Lambs*. Consider, for example, the praise that feminist critics have showered on the film—often over the loud countercharges of gay activists that the film's portrayal of Buffalo Bill is blatantly homophobic.

On an obvious, formal level Demme's film clearly is struggling to make a feminist statement; Demme has said as much himself, calling it a challenge to what he calls "the patriarchy." Demme proudly points out that he has (in a favorite postmodern strategy) reversed the "genre base" of the slasher film by portraying a woman's successful pursuit of a man—in the daring, heroic effort, moreover, to prevent yet another woman's violent death at the hands of a sexually deranged man. And in the film he also goes out of his way to frame Clarice in scenes where she is surrounded by men in uniform, thereby suggesting that she is an ambitious pioneer in the authoritarian male hierarchy of the law-enforcement bureaucracy.

Yet the feminist embrace of this message—unlike the gay community's outcry over the film—is strangely inattentive to detail. No feminist critic has noted how significant female char-

acters from Harris's novel (such as the terminally ill wife of Clarice's FBI supervisor and the flashback figure of Clarice's mother) have dropped out of the film entirely. Such decisions were doubtless intended to strengthen Clarice's image as a singular, heroic woman—but at the considerable cost of isolating her from any sort of strong female role model. Under such conditions, Clarice becomes a sort of yuppie ideal-type, furiously investing her profession with the full measure of life's meaning, since her personal history and cultural background appear only as occasions of shame. The logic of Demme's characterization also ensures that her professional embrace of the FBI as an avenue to feminist power and self- assertion cannot be seriously questioned: Where else is she to turn?

It is scarcely surprising, then, that Clarice's search for the killer turns into an all-out Hobbesian sort of sex war. A character such as Clarice's supervisor, without an ailing wife to care for, is rendered infinitely less complicated and sympathetic, just as Clarice's father, without a strong wife to support him and survive his death, becomes a pasteboard authoritarian personality. Both characters then may slide easily into the heinous ranks of "the patriarchy"—a numbing continuum that stretches from Clarice's father to Buffalo Bill. If this is a feminist message, we do well to question its credibility and its humanity.

Indeed we do well to question the entire contemptuous, class-insulated vision of American life that Jonathan Demme has offered us throughout the latter half of the nineteen eighties. It is a vision that relentlessly flattens out the character of the allegiances, emotions, and moral conflicts that constitute our daily lives—even when Demme seeks to advance a "progressive" cultural agenda via strategic depictions of race and gender. Until we recognize that the aesthetic behind this vision is unto its innermost parts a creation of our society's now-habitual postmodern reflexes of cultural privilege and class-contempt, we are trapped, much like the characters of *The Silence of the Lambs,* in a darkening world of impenetrable social isolation and senseless brutality. And if the remarkable commercial and critical success of Demme's film is any indication, we have grown increasingly receptive to a codified image of ourselves—or at least the vast, nonprofessional majority of us—as blind and untutored creatures of that world, capable at any moment of exploding into vicious, self-hating destruction and rage. □

BOOK REVIEW

Usable Utopians

Robert Westbrook

Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford by Casey Nelson Blake. University of North Carolina Press, 1990, 365 pp.

Americans, Lewis Mumford complained in 1925, suffer from an "infirm sense of history" that prevents them from recognizing "that the past is a state to conserve, that it is a reservoir from which we can replenish our own emptiness, that so far from being the ever-vanishing moment, it is the abiding heritage in a community's life." Lacking a "usable past," he said, Americans were ill-prepared for an uncertain future. The observation is as pertinent today as it was 65 years ago.

Regrettably Mumford, the masterful social thinker who died last year at the age of 94, did not live quite long enough to read Casey Nelson Blake's analysis of his attempt—and that of fellow intellectuals Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, and Waldo Frank—to make history a resource for the present and, in the process, to will a valuable legacy to the future. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Blake's quartet comprised an influential circle of cultural critics known to historians as the "Young Americans." The name signifies the important role they played as opponents of the genteel values of their Victorian elders and as proponents of a revitalized national culture. While not completely forgotten in our time, their work has seldom served as a point of reference in contemporary debates about the moral dilemmas of American life. They have yet to become part of the sort of usable past Mumford described.

Blake argues that this neglect is unfortunate. He writes:

> The important questions the Young Americans asked some seventy years ago—about the ethical shallowness of Progressivism, the cultural consequences of the industrial division of labor, the dangers

Robert Westbrook teaches American history at the University of Rochester and is the author of John Dewey and American Democracy *(Cornell University Press, 1991).*

posed by the centralized state to local communities, and the crisis of personal identity in corporate society—have been raised for discussion only at rare intervals, often without any awareness that they had ever been asked before.... A vital usable past based on the Young Americans' cultural criticism would free present-day criticism from the endless rediscovery of past positions.

Blake's *Beloved Community* is an effort to create this past, and thereby to enrich contemporary social criticism by opening a dialogue with the Young Americans, who provide, he contends, one of the richest reservoirs from which we might replenish our culture.

At the heart of the thought of the Young Americans, Blake argues, was a "communitarian vision of self-realization through participation in a democratic culture" rooted in two quite different traditions. On the one hand, they drew on the romantic critique of capitalism developed by such nineteenth-century predecessors as John Ruskin, William Morris, and the American Transcendentalists. This romanticism they combined with what Blake calls "a radicalized variant of civic republicanism," a long tradition of public humanism stretching back to Aristotle. In early twentieth-century America, the republican tradition found its preeminent expression in the democratic social philosophy of John Dewey. As Blake notes, both these traditions had produced powerful indictments of industrial capitalism for the threat it posed to "the need for personal fulfillment in small-scale communities knit together by shared cultural traditions, mutual aid, and a sense of the common good." With their syncretic critique, the Young Americans advanced a radicalism directed above all at the moral and aesthetic distortions of personality that modernity had fostered. "We were all sworn foes of capitalism," Frank later wrote, "not because we knew it would not work, but because we judged it, even in success, to be lethal to the human spirit."

The Young Americans' cultural criticism was most appealing, Blake argues, when they were able to hold romanticism and republicanism together in an aestheticized democratic theory. In so doing, they successfully combined Dewey's pragmatism with a critique of the degradation of industrial work that borrowed heavily from Ruskin and Morris. At such times, they tried to envision a public culture and communal institutions that would simultaneously promote individual and social reformation. They articulated a socialist vision grounded not in centralized state power but in decentralized workplace democracy.

The Young Americans were almost wholly inattentive to the nexus of means and ends that a truly democratic social philosophy must consider.

The high point in the critical project of Bourne, Brooks, and Frank came prior to the U.S.'s entry into World War I, when they all worked on the short-lived journal *Seven Arts* (1916-17). *Seven Arts* provided a forum in which they could move beyond the vaporous defense of the individual "soul" that marked their earliest work. Their goal had become nothing less than what Bourne termed a "good life of personality lived in the environment of the Beloved Community."

But what Blake calls "aesthetic pragmatism" proved a highly unstable compound. Civic republicanism and Deweyan political philosophy were decidedly minor keys in the thinking of Brooks and Frank. They (and, occasionally, Bourne as well) veered toward a purer romanticism that harbored potentially undemocratic sentiments. They were impatient with the give-and-take of ordinary politics. Their own politics of personality, Blake notes, often "substituted artistic leadership and spiritual therapies for a sustained project of civic reconstruction." After a disillusioning experience with the political squabbles of Non-Partisan League populists in the Midwest who failed to embrace his prophecies, Frank derided democratic politics and advised Brooks that "representative government under any plan will bring into the places of power men who are shallow, plausible, insensitive." On occasions like this when their romantic values came unhinged from a republican theory of citizenship, the Young Americans tended to turn inward and abandon hope for social reconstruction. Frank wrote to Sherwood Anderson after his brush with the Non-Partisan League that politics made him feel unclean. He admitted he was "really happy only in my own world ... where there is no yesterday and tomorrow—no judging and no deciding—only infinite beauty and infinite motion into the fixity of truth."

Nothing served more to unhinge the Young Americans' prior beliefs than U.S. intervention in the Great War. They bitterly charged Dewey and other liberals who supported Woodrow Wilson's crusade with betraying the project of cultural renewal. Dewey's position soured them on pragmatism and drove them back into the vague aestheticism of their youth. After delivering slashing antiwar polemics that cost *Seven Arts* its financial support, Bourne withdrew briefly into the role of Nietzschean malcontent before his death at 32 in the influenza epidemic of 1918. Brooks soon rid his work of its socialist inflections and descended into the madness that would nearly kill him in the mid-1920s. He then emerged from a nervous breakdown to write sunny literary histories bereft of the critical impulses that had shaped his early work. Frank fell into the mysticism that had always threatened to engulf his thinking, encouraged along this path by three visitations from God in 1920. Aesthetic pragmatism was preserved, however, in the work of Mumford, the youngest of the Young Americans, whose work Blake regards as the most effective and concrete expression of its possibilities. He finds in Mumford's writing of the 1920s an incipient conception of "cultural citizenship" based on hopes for a revival of regional culture and local politics, and a theory of "symbolic interaction." A sharp critic of the state, Mumford insisted that "small groups: small classes: small communities: institutions framed to the human scale, are essential to purposive behavior in modern society."

No less than the other Young Americans, Mumford was forever betraying the romantic-republican synthesis. But whereas Brooks and Frank were pulled away from its premises by utopias of mystical escape, Mumford was more inclined to drift into utopias

of technocracy. Impatient with democratic politics, Mumford proposed that revolutionary cadres of expert professionals ("Scipians") should usher in the beloved community that ordinary people could never build for themselves. "With plans, with concrete ideals," he intoned, "they will appeal to the groping intelligence and the underlying desires of the majority: demonstrating their clarity of purpose and their technical skill, they will win assent."

Despite such elitist appeals, Blake insists that there remains another Mumford who should figure prominently in our usable past. When he called for the recovery of regional identities, Mumford advanced a more participatory civic ideal modeled on the rituals of medieval culture. In the religious processions of the Middle Ages, he observed,

> the spectators were also communicants and participants: they engaged in the spectacle, watching it from within, not from without: or rather, feeling it from within, acting in unison, not dismembered beings, reduced to a single specialized role. Prayer, mass, pageant, life-ceremony, baptism, marriage, or funeral—the city itself was a stage for these separate scenes of the drama, and the citizen himself was actor.

Regional planning, Mumford argued, could foster small-scale communities in which modern equivalents of such shared rituals in public space would flourish, detached from the authoritarianism of medieval theology and grounded in a pragmatic philosophy of experimental education and experience. It is above all this ideal of cultural citizenship, of the mutual creation of symbolic forms, that Blake believes "deserves to be salvaged from the rest of the Young Americans' organicist theory—with its antidemocratic cult of prophetic leaders, its denigration of popular politics, and its mystical conception of cultural unanimity."

Beloved Community is, as Alan Trachtenberg notes in his foreword, "not only a study of cultural criticism, but an example of it." Blake beautifully orchestrates a conversation among the Young Americans in which he himself is an active and critical participant, and which he invites his readers to join. I myself must confess to a very modest role in the forging of Blake's conversation. On a number of occasions he and I have engaged in friendly argument about the virtues and vices of his dramatis personae. He thanks me in the book for "relentless efforts" to shape his view of Dewey. I, in turn, have him to thank for a more appreciative understanding of Bourne, Brooks, Frank, and (especially) Mumford.

Yet as much as Blake has done to alert me to the critical nature of the Young Americans, I remain unconvinced that they have earned quite the democratic credentials to which he claims they are, at their best, entitled. Blake himself upbraids his subjects again and again for failing to democratize their communitarian critique of industrial society and culture; and he insists that, in so doing, he is only appealing to their own best instincts. Yet what stands out most in the book is not the resilient communitarianism Blake sees in the work of the Young Americans, but his penetrating criticism of their romantic mysticism and fondness for technocratic social engineering. In the end, the most democratic social critic in *Beloved Community* is its author.

This is not to say that the Young Americans (at least Bourne and Mumford) did not sometimes envision a democratic future. Indeed, it would be hard to match this plea for participatory democracy from Mumford's *Culture of Cities* (1938):

> The real alternative to the empty political patterns of the nineteenth century lies, not in totalitarianism, but in just the opposite of this: the restoration of the human scale in government, the multiplication of the units of autonomous service, the widening of the cooperative processes of government, the general reduction of the area of arbitrary compulsion, the restoration of the processes of persuasion and rational agreement. Political life, instead of being the monopoly of remote specialists, must become as constant a process in daily living as the housewife's visit to the grocer or the butcher, and more frequent than the man's visit to the barber. If the leisure that man has been promised by the machine counts for anything, it must count for the extension of

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the privilege of being an active political animal.

The difficulty with the future Mumford envisioned emerges (as Blake says) from his conviction that this sort of polis was one that could only be built by an elite of planners and intellectuals. Even at their most democratic, the Young Americans were almost wholly inattentive to the nexus of means and ends that a truly democratic social philosophy must consider. This relationship was perhaps the most significant aspect of Dewey's social philosophy that they neglected. As Dewey remarked in 1888 in the first of many statements on the subject, the ethical ideals of democracy "are not satisfied merely when all men sound the note of harmony with the highest social good, so be it that they have not worked it out for themselves." A truly democratic community could not be planned *for* the people; it had to be built *by* the people. The political life that Mumford envisioned, Dewey contended, had to be prefigured in the politics that would bring it into being if it was to be inhabited by the sort of citizens who could sustain it. The democratic intellectual could not lose patience with populist politics.

Whether one thinks the Young Americans faltered because of a failure to be consistently true to their democratic insights or because they lacked such insights in the first place, the ideal of participatory cultural citizenship that Blake derives from their work is nonetheless a compelling one. Blake has constructed a usable past for the "communitarian" critique of modern American culture launched by Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Bellah, and others who appear unaware that earlier critics had anticipated their insights and blindnesses. And he adds his own powerful vision of democratic renewal to the debate they have initiated. Thus, although *Beloved Community* may well insure for its subjects what Mumford termed "a destiny beyond life's physical span," I finished the book convinced that the most attractive voice in it is that of Casey Blake, a Young American who is still alive and kicking. □

BOOK REVIEW

A Life of the Party

Robin D. G. Kelley

Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party by Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman. Oxford University Press, 1990, 263 pp.

In an age when the Western press and policymakers have happily declared the death of socialism, the appearance of a memoir by an ex-Communist who is still as committed to the socialist ideal as when she joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1928 might seem, at best, untimely. But *Dorothy Healey Remembers,* aside from being an engrossing story in its own right, is welcome because it moves us closer to understanding why the Communist party (CP) failed to create and sustain a truly independent approach to socialist politics.

A local organizer in California who rose to national prominence in the CP and remained a member until 1973, Healey reveals two different sides of the movement: a rank-and-file with a rich heritage of ingenious grass-roots self-activity; and an insensitive, egomaniacal, and vacillating bureaucracy. Her observations of the ways in which top-down decisions undermined local initiatives break through the false dichotomy that has bedeviled the historiography of American communism. She challenges both the familiar model of near-total Soviet control over the CP (most fully developed by Theodore Draper) and the "history from below" approach common among most younger social historians. While events in Eastern Europe in 1956 and 1968 certainly hastened the Party's demise, Healey's experiences lead one to conclude that its virtual collapse was, in large measure, self-inflicted.

Healey's recollections alone are quite valuable, but the creative editing of her collaborator, historian Maurice Isserman, turned what would have been a very good book into a great one. Isserman constructed the narrative from an earlier oral biography and his own interviews; then, he inserted excerpts from primary and secondary sources in a montage style reminiscent of documentary film. His selections from a wide range of documents—personal letters, internal memos, FBI reports, and interviews with Healey's friends and confidants—enrich the text by providing context and supporting evidence, or serving as a contrapuntal voice. Some of the pieces are wonderfully humorous, such as the resumé-like report about her placed

Robin D. G. Kelley teaches history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is the author of Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression *(University of North Carolina Press, 1990).*

immediately after Healey's remark that the Bureau "did a much better job of keeping track of our members than we did." Others are particularly moving, such as "Mommy's" 1949 letter to a young Richard Healey written from her jail cell. This narrative strategy (also used by Al Fraser in Dizzy Gillespie's *To Be or Not to Bop*) gives the book a visual quality as well as the sense that a dialogue is taking place between Healey and her own past.

Born in Denver in 1914, Dorothy Rosenblum grew up in a very unorthodox Jewish, working-class household. Her mother, the Hungarian-born Barbara Nestor, rebelled against her parents' faith and set a precedent for her daughter by joining the Socialist and then the Communist party. Nestor's strong anti-authoritarian beliefs instilled in Dorothy the idea that the needs of "the people" should always come before the dictates of leadership. Healey, who was barely a teenager when she joined the YCL, had become a veteran labor organizer of agricultural and cannery workers before she reached the age of twenty-one. After World War II, she rose rapidly within the ranks of the Los Angeles CP, one of the largest and most dynamic districts in the Party. In the aftermath of Khrushchev's revelations in 1956, she emerged as one of the CP's leading internal critics. But the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 crushed any hopes she still had of transforming the Party; five years later, after having spent forty-five years in its ranks, she resigned.

As a prominent woman communist, Healey was a mixture of rebellion and tradition. She pushed her way into all-male circles, debated with the best of her male comrades, battled cops on picket lines, and spent an enormous amount of time in jail. Yet, she felt obligated to get married and was so concerned about her physical appearance that she got a nose job. She professed somewhat Victorian attitudes toward sexuality—which she once defended by quoting Lenin—and allowed her second husband to openly pursue extramarital affairs. Her unorthodox, relatively unhappy intimate relationships had less to do with her own sexual attitudes than with her priorities: the movement was more important than romance. In that movement, she maintains, the rank-and-file was generally more enlightened about both racism and sexism than were those in leadership positions. In the world according to Healey, union members, Communists, even her apolitical Black neighbors transcended prejudice and exhibited greater humanity than did many Black and white Party bigwigs. At times, she describes the ability of the workers to transcend their own racism in almost mystical terms. During a strike in California's Imperial Valley in 1934 involving Filipinos, Chicanos, and some whites, Healey recalls: "All of them, in their own way, were initially afflicted with feelings of mutual racial animosity, and yet within a few days the suspicions and the prejudices just evaporated through the comradeship that came from sharing common experiences and hardships." Even a sympathetic historian would find this hard to believe. But it does reinforce her point that grass-roots organizers must have faith and trust in the masses.

American communists were part of an imagined diaspora; the Soviet Union was their motherland.

In fairness to Healey, however, it would be wrong to assume that she deliberately altered the facts to make a larger point. As a woman born one year before the rebirth of the Klan and six years before the passage of the women's suffrage amendment, Healey judged her experience in the 1930s by entirely different standards than ours today. No matter how much evidence of sex and race discrimination scholars can detect in the CP or its auxiliaries, the culture these radicals constructed was a far cry from the brutally racist and sexist universe that surrounded them.

The most prominent theme in the book is the relationship between Soviet, national, and local leadership. Time and again, a tiny circle of national Communist leaders made decisions that overrode the judgment of local activists and weakened the Party's base. Rather than place the entire blame on Soviet domination or individual American bureaucrats, Healey sees the problem as stemming from a lack of internal democracy. Rank-and-file members were overburdened with daily organizing tasks and thus had little time to reflect on the implications of Party policy. And national leaders presented an image of unanimity, seldom allowing minority positions to be published or open debates to be held.

But the relationship between the various levels of leadership was never quite that simple. In California, for example, local cadres had already begun to move toward coalition politics well before the Communist International endorsed the Popular Front at its Seventh Congress in 1935. Healey and her comrades were operating in a state where the Communists did much to form a powerful progressive coalition. They worked closely with a number of California liberals (including future red-baiters Sam Yorty and Jack Tenney) and played a minor role in the gubernatorial election of left-liberal Democrat Culbert Olson in 1938. Indeed, Healey, an open Communist, even served as Olson's deputy state labor commissioner. In short, the People's Front worked well in California, and the fact that the Comintern and national leaders had advocated the policy gave top level Party bureaucrats an "aura of infallibility."

Perhaps unintentionally, Healey's narrative reveals another reason why so many American Communists maintained an uncritical stance toward national and international leadership. Her observations compel the reader to think less about what role the USSR played in "dictating" CP policy and more about what the Soviet Union meant in the minds of rank-and-file Party members. When Soviet fliers successfully flew across the Arctic circle in 1929 and landed in San Francisco, Healey recorded it in her diary as "my biggest thrill." For most Party cadres, it was (and still is) virtually impossible to reconcile the USSR's role as the movement's beacon of hope with the need to maintain a critical detachment toward the first socialist society. As I point out in my recent study of the Alabama CP, the USSR for Southern Black Communists was largely an imaginary creation, much in the way that followers of Marcus Garvey reinvented Africa or prospective immigrants imagined the U.S. as a promised land. American communists were part of an imagined diaspora; the Soviet Union was their motherland.

During the 1940s and 1950s, most of

Healey's comrades not only refused to criticize the USSR but went along with some incredibly destructive policies. To her credit, she openly talks about her part in decisions such as the Party's past support for the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and the expulsion of members who were undergoing psychoanalytic therapy. At the same time, Healey was not blind to Soviet faults. The events of 1956 actually reinforced her criticisms of the CP. So why did she not leave the Party in 1956 as did thousands of others? Part of the answer lies in a statement she made at the time to ex-Communist screenwriter Paul Jarrico: "I'm not going to let those bastards have the Party." She honestly believed that a more progressive faction could come to power within the CP or, at least, that the Party had the capacity to reform. One can only imagine what would have happened if all the reform-minded Communists had stuck it out as she did. Would the history of American Communism after 1956 have been any different?

There is still another reason why Healey remained a Communist long after 1956. Under her leadership, the Southern California CP began to carve out for itself a modicum of autonomy. During the Smith Act trials in Southern California, for example, Healey and other state leaders challenged the National Party's "five minutes to midnight" policy—the notion that war with the Soviet Union and the rise of domestic fascism were inevitable—and thus opposed the decision to send key cadres into underground status. By the mid-1960s, the California CP had become so rebellious that it earned a reputation as the "Yugoslavia" of American Communism. In spite of government harassment, the Los Angeles Party played a small but dynamic role in the peace movement, the New Left, and local and state Democratic politics (Healey even polled over 86,000 votes in a bid for State Tax Assessor in 1966).

Healey finally left the Party in 1973 when she could no longer stomach the leadership's blind conformity to every decision made in Moscow. But she soon joined the new American movement (now transmogrified into the Democratic Socialists of America) and remains a dedicated leftist. Her continuing activism proves that the dismal conditions of working people in the United States, not events across the ocean, brought her to and kept her in the movement. Indeed, it is precisely what Healey "remembers"—what she has experienced—that has informed her radicalism for over sixty years. And since the destruction of the Berlin Wall has not made capitalism in the United States any "kinder and gentler" for the homeless, the jobless, and people of color, we should expect to find Dorothy Healey, and others like her, on picket lines, on the air, or behind podiums teaching about socialism and the pitfalls of the current system. □

INTERVIEW WITH BORIS KAGARLITSKY

(Continued from p. 15)

at least in my experience in the United States, workers are suspicious of outsiders, especially intellectuals.

Kagarlitsky: Well, that's not our case. First of all in the Soviet Union, the influence of intellectuals is not only very high, I think it's too high. I think the people have got some sort of over-respect for the intellectual. There is just a feeling that the intellectuals are created to make decisions for other people.

Gitlin: Isn't this a continuation of the Leninist understanding of the role?

Kagarlitsky: No, it's probably very different. I think it's an acceptance of certain privileges. While the people are very much against material privileges, they do not understand the spiritual privileges; if you make the spiritual life a privilege it's even worse. Thus the hierarchization of society, and some aesthetic elements of mentality, accepting the tradition that there should be some sort of caste created by somebody to think for us and to monopolize the spiritual potential of society.

Gitlin: Are you having some success in working within these official unions, and creating these reform tendencies?

Kagarlitsky: Yes. We have some influence over the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions and also the other groups are getting rather successful. Some sections of the union bureaucracies have the same attitudes as the workers. They come and say, tell us what to do next. Then we have the problem of telling them that we would rather have them decide themselves what to do next, than tell them each time what to do next.

Gitlin: So if you're successful, the social base of the democratic tendencies will become different from what it is.

Kagarlitsky: Absolutely.

Gitlin: I want to ask you about the disposition of the democratic forces toward women's rights.

Kagarlitsky: Well, that is never an easy question, because if you speak theoretically, everybody on the Left is completely in favor of that and accepts everything that they say in the Western Left. But then, look at the facts. The First Congress of the Socialist Party had three

women delegates. The Second Congress had none. Why? Because the male activists just didn't believe in the women ... they didn't trust them, they didn't consider them reliable enough to elect them. And all the other parties are worse, because at least we discuss the problem, whereas the others don't even do that. □

POETRY SUPPLEMENT

(Continued from p. 71)

Two Trees

At first, for the man and woman,
everything was beautiful.
Which is to say there was no beauty
since there was not its opposite, its absence.
Every tree was "pleasant to the sight,"
the cattle also, and every creeping thing.

But at the center, the foreground of the painting,
God put two trees, different from the others.
One was shrubby, spreading near the ground
lithe branches, like a fountain,
studded with fruit and thorns.
When the woman saw this tree was good for food
and a tree to be desired to make one wise,
she ate,
and also saw
the other, even more to be desired,
tallest in the garden, its leaves
a deeper green than all the others',
its boughs, shapely and proportionate,
hung with sweet fruit that never fell,
fruit that made the birds nesting there
graceful, brightly-plumed and musical,
yet when they pecked it showed no scar.

To eat from both these trees was to be a god.
So God kept them from the second fruit,
and sent them into thistles and violent weather,
wearing the skins of lesser beasts—
let them garden dust and stony ground,
let them bear a child who was beautiful,
as they had been, and also bear a child
marked and hateful as they would become,
and bring these forth from the body's
stink and sorrow while the mind cried out
for that addictive tree it had tasted,
and for that other, crown still visible
over the wall.

—Ellen Bryant Voigt

Ringstrasse Elegy, 1913

The doctor, on his noontime stroll along
The Ringstrasse, stops at a bench to lunch

On sad dreams of lost cravings, attenuated
Appetites. The Vienna Woods so near, the dear

Sprouting mushrooms there, the way
A plump cap fits in the hand so neatly, cupped

Palm, o supple meat, the sweet damp
Tenderness: without thought or premeditation and

Man might find his own fingers closing round the stalk
And squeezing then pulling quickly to have it off

With a snap, larks rising & trilling in Danube lagoons,
They would loop, trill & swoop as you swallowed it
entire,

Innocent anodyne, you owned it quietly—*mine*—
In the purple shadows, umbrage of pine, as pink-

Yellow crocuses pushed through the woods' floor.
You would croon softly there, nourished & calm

Till the lights came on in the city,
Till time for the long walk back home.

—Patricia Traxler

SOVIET JEWS

(Continued from p. 20)

"Most of us came to Israel with right-wing political positions," Bouman says about her own generation of *olim*, "but since then we have moved toward the center or left-of-center."

When four women were murdered near a playground in Kiryat Yovel, Jerusalem, Dr. Levitchik was walking on a nearby street. "It was horrible," she says, "horrible like any wound inflicted on a person who had no relation to the deed. Horrible like disease." I asked her how the disease might be cured. "I don't know. It will take me a long time to understand, at least several more years, and first I need to be able to read newspapers in Hebrew." Most of the *olim* I spoke with responded with a hesitant "I don't know yet" when I questioned them about the Palestinian situation. This sort of caution does not necessarily get recorded in opinion polls.

Soviet impressions of Israeli views, normally, are less reserved, filtered through cultural prejudices that the *olim* have transposed onto the cultural divisions of Israeli life. "Where did your parents come from?" a young woman physician, ten days in the country, asks me. I reply that my mother is from Poland, and my father was born in Israel. "It is possible to see immediately that she is from a cultured family, that she isn't Sephardic," she tells the translator. The translator tries to argue, but she is firm in her stance. "It is possible to feel the difference. Sephardim, you know, are like the Georgians, the Uzbekistanians."

In my conversation with her, Leah Praver describes some of her students as racist, prejudiced against the Sephardim. "They identify the Sephardim with the Asian Soviet peoples, whom they consider to be barbarian."

"When I came to Israel I was shocked that I couldn't see any Jews," recalls Bouman. "What does a Jew look like? Short, wearing glasses, long nose. A kind of Woody Allen. He couldn't be a hero, and certainly not Sephardic. Jewish women have curly hair and black eyes like me ... but Jews from Georgia and Buchara whom I met in Moscow at the consulate, they also didn't look Jewish."

Israeli economic life, however, is not so readily translated into terms familiar to the *olim*. In the Soviet Union, Bouman explains, money had a limited value, because the options for purchasing were limited. Also, Russian tradition considers the discussion of monetary matters impolite. "When the immigrants are faced with negotiating their salary conditions, they give up before they even start—or the opposite: they falsely exaggerate their demands and are perceived as aggressive."

Nonetheless, the possibilities that the free market seems to offer still arouse considerable excitement. "Among my students capitalism and socialism are synonyms for good and bad," remarks Praver. "'Whoever stays down and out after thirty years, probably deserves to be down and out,' they tell me."

Political democracy presents a still more troubled challenge to the *olim*. The immigrants come to seek freedom; but they also remember the economic insecurity and commodity shortages that accompanied recent democratization initiatives in the Soviet Union. "It is possible to bark democracy, but not to eat it," a young immigrant told Yuli Edelstein. Praver claims that her students believe that "democracy and anarchy are the same thing." This distrust could well further distort the character of Israeli politics. It could affect the standing of the Labor party, or wreak havoc with conventional alignments. *Ulpan* students advocate the abolition of the rabbinate and a harder line with the Arabs all in the same breath. But any forecast hazarded in the early stages of this cultural encounter is premature. Alongside the forbidding prophecies of Michael Agorsky, it is possible to hear other voices. After 15 months in the country, and several months of work in an orchestra in Be'er Sheva, Alexander Fein cannot cling to sentiments of cultural chauvinism: "Israelis have better education than I do. In school, they didn't waste time learning about the history and ideology of the Party. We grew up in a closed system that created a closed spirit. My children will grow up with a free spirit."

The freedom that Russians are encountering can sometimes feel overwhelming to them. Russian students, for example, who are used to tough discipline and a distant relationship with the teacher, sometimes perceive the typical Israeli high-school milieu as anarchic. Without the skills to identify the rules of the game, they sometimes assume there are no rules. "On the first day of school they see an Israeli boy put his feet on the desk and on the second day they put their feet on the head of the Israeli boy."

"The crisis of the teenagers begins beforehand, in the USSR," explains Mirsky. "Glasnost pushed people down who were used to being treated with authoritarian discipline and they grew up without any backbone. In order to understand what is happening to teens in Israel, it is necessary to understand the Russian family background. If the image of the Israeli family is that of a parent surrounded by a bunch of children, the Russian family typically has one child, and around him at

least three adults: parents and at least one grandmother, who is the ruler of the household. The child, who is the focus of Soviet ideology, is also at the center of attention; not as a separate entity but rather as an extension of the adults, as someone who is explicitly meant to meet their needs and wishes.

"A young man comes in for counseling at the Hebrew University with his entire household. 'What do you want to study?' I ask. 'We want to study mathematics,' the grandmother answers, 'but we haven't finished high school yet.'" The authoritarian way of relating and looking at the world gets internalized and shapes the way that many Russians will respond to their external environment. But the rigid rules in family life may help the individual learn to accommodate to an oppressive social world.

"On the other hand," Mirsky observes, "the very strict boundaries in family life sometimes become a substitute for developing one's own internal code. When the political system begins to break open, the family system also cracks. The result is Russian *olim*, who seem to have such strong boundaries, actually ending up without boundaries; and phenomena like prostitution, drug abuse, and sex without limits, which we are seeing today among students in Israel. Many of these people simply don't have sufficient internal boundaries to act under conditions of freedom."

But not everyone worries as much as Mirsky about the future well-being of the Soviet *olim*. "Professionally they will become well assimilated, as did the members of my aliya," says Yuli Edelstein. "Their cultural and social absorption is a different matter, and here, as in the aliya of the 1970s, we may have to wait for the next generation. One thing I am certain of—whoever doesn't live in Israel now resides outside of the flow of Jewish history, because from a cultural and intellectual perspective, history is being made in the State of Israel."

"Sometimes," says Maya Kaganskaya, "it seems like only two people live in Israel: Mr. Right and Mr. Left. At least this aliya will add some new voices." What these voices will have to say—and how the various, mutual cultural changes wrought by the immigration will affect the hearing they get—is another, remarkable challenge for the State of Israel's future.

A challenge ... to be sure. But there is also the danger in describing this aliya, with all its complexities, that we will miss the excitement and energy that this immigration has generated. The cultural differences are great—and ironically they are often accentuated by the illusion that they are not so great. Yet many Israelis and Russians experience these differences as exciting opportunities for growth. Israelis often see the Russians as spiritual, restrained, and polite—as people, in other words, who possess qualities that Israelis feel are often missing in their own lives. Conversely, Russians often see Israelis as very free, and envy that freedom. As a result, both communities find much pleasure in the cultural differences they encounter. Much has been made of the extraordinary generosity of Israelis as they've opened their homes and lives to Russian immigrants. Yet this publicity often overlooks a crucial, simple fact: Israelis are often nice to the immigrants not only out of an ideological commitment to Zionism or to the Jewish people, but also because they enjoy this meeting with Russian Jews. Perhaps in this enjoyment lies the greatest hope. □

CHASIDISM

(Continued from p. 25)

with God. Following earlier kabbalistic sources, Chasidic literature described this unification (*devekut*) in highly erotic language that stood out in dramatic contrast to the hostility of many Chasidic authorities toward human sexuality. A parable attributed to Baal Shem Tov captures this uneasy relationship between physical and spiritual sexuality:

> A king had a son whom he wanted to teach various wisdoms that are necessary [for a prince]. He hired a number of scholars to study with him, but the prince did not learn anything. Finally, the scholars despaired of ever teaching him and only one of them remained with him. One day, the prince saw a young maiden and desired her beauty. The scholar complained to the king about this, but the king said: "Since he has experienced desire, even in this way, through his physical desire, he will attain all wisdom." The king summoned the girl to court and instructed her not to allow herself to be seduced by him until he had acquired one teaching. And so she did. Afterwards, she demanded that he learn yet another teaching until, in this way, he had finally acquired all of them. Once he became wise, he came to despise the girl, for he intended to marry a princess of his own station. The meaning of the parable is clear.

If the prince is supposed to be a Chasidic holy man, the class distinctions between him and the girl immediately suggest that earthly love is not appropriate to his spiritual station. He must marry a princess of his own rank: the Shekhina. The prince's desire is used to trick him into learning wisdom until he finally learns enough to overcome his physical needs. Consonant with the

doctrine of "annihilating the material," the parable teaches that the only legitimate role of the physical is to function as a vehicle for its own elimination. The process of achieving transcendence does not, however, require first satisfying or indulging one's desires; on the con-trary, the girl repeatedly withholds herself as a way of provoking the prince to achieve further wisdom until he no longer desires her.

To fully understand this parable, it is not sufficient to translate it into a set of abstract mystical symbols; it must also be understood in its concrete human context, which can best be reconstructed by reading it from a woman's point of view. The girl has only an instrumental function in the story, just as the Maggid and Elimelech, among others, reduced the wife of the zaddik to the functional equivalent of the tefillin. *Her* desire for the prince receives no mention and she is cast off when he achieves transcendence. To be sure, she is not the same as the Chasidic wife, since she is an active agent in promoting the prince's spiritual progress. But the subtext of the parable is that only by renouncing women and erotic pleasure in this world can the male adept achieve their spiritual analogues in the world above.

The displacement of eroticism into theology was not new to Chasidism. Erotic theology played a central role in the Kabbala, where human sexuality influences and parallels sexual relations between the male and female aspects of God. But what is new here, it seems to me, is the singular emphasis on sexual relations between the mystic and God in *opposition* to human intercourse. Conjugal relations might be the starting point for this theological unification, but they had to be emptied of all earthly content.

In addition, however, Chasidism often spoke of erotic relations between the Chasid and God quite apart from the marital bed. In the court of Baruch of Medzibozh, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, for example, the reading of the Song of Songs became an erotic experience of unification with God. The frenzy with which the Chasidim responded to the text suggests the atmosphere of a displaced orgy. One usually thinks of the allegorization of the Song of Songs as a strategy of downplaying the poem's erotic force in favor of more "lofty" virtues, but here the allegory provoked a sexual response no less powerful than a literal reading of the text. The love song between God and Israel had now become a poem of sexual relations between the Chasid and the divine.

The origins of this explicit erotic theology would appear to be in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov himself regarding prayer:

> Prayer is a form of intercourse with the Shekhina and just as in the beginning of intercourse one moves one's body, so it is necessary to move one's body at first in prayer, but afterwards one can stand still without any movement when one unites with the Shekhina. The power of his movement causes a great arousal, for it causes him to think: "Why am I moving myself?" [And he answers himself:] "Because perhaps the Shekhina is actually standing in front of me." And from this great power, he comes to a great passion.

Here we seem to find striking corroboration of the anti-Chasidic accusation that the Chasidim act in prayer as if they are having intercourse with the female emanation of God. There is, to be sure, no talk here of erections or ejaculations. But the language is so explicitly erotic that it is easy to see how an author hostile to Chasidism might construe the teaching literally.

In particular, unification with the Shekhina seems virtually equivalent to orgasm. This is, however, orgasm associated with death: "It is only out of grace from God that man remains alive after prayer, since, from a physical point of view, he should die, for he loses all his life force in prayer." If sexuality on the human plane was perceived as threatening, how much more so was intercourse with God Herself. Yet, at the same time, what a challenge it must have seemed to a virile, young Chasid to conquer the Shekhina and survive. Might we have here the spiritual version of a male fantasy of seducing an insatiable, seemingly unattainable erotic woman—literally, in this case, a sex goddess?

But instead of imagining or actually viewing a woman as a vehicle for confronting and overcoming one's desires, Chasidism taught that one should imagine that one is having sex with the Shekhina. Lust should be displaced rather than suppressed. Or, to put it differently, Chasidism made God the object of desire for the purpose of constructing a community of ecstatic worshippers. This male fellowship of temporarily celibate Chasidim became the social setting for an erotic theology of extraordinary power.

The association between sexual asceticism and erotic theology is well known from the history of religions, and particularly the history of Christian asceticism. We are not surprised to learn that celibate monks and nuns developed powerful erotic feelings for the Virgin Mary or Jesus. It is more surprising, however, to find such ideas in a movement in which virtually all men were married. While neither asceticism nor a theology of eroticism was without earlier precedent in Judaism, Chasidism took both to a radical extreme and gave them, for the first time, a mass following.

The displacement of sexuality from the human to the divine realm became, in effect, the theological analogue for the displacement of the Chasid from his family to the court of the zaddik. This doctrine must have spoken directly to the hearts of those in search of both personal and theological answers to the issues raised by the practice of early marriage.

The opponents of Chasidism were quick to note the social consequences of Chasidic teaching. Their polemical literature is filled with accusations that the Chasidic court system was destroying the Jewish family: "The Chasidim cause girls to cease procreating," one critic complained, "since they ensnare the souls of the husbands from their wives and [the wives] sit as grass widows, while their sons grow up like sheep without a shepherd." For the opponents of Chasidism, this abandonment of wife and children was not for any holy purpose. Rather, the extreme asceticism the Chasidim often preached was, in the view of their opponents, a cover for erotic abandon—just as the mystical doctrine of intercourse with the Shekhina was nothing but a mask for licentious behavior in the court of the zaddik. Men and women were said to sit together and become lustful after drinking wine: "They contaminate the wives of their fellows and pair off with them.... They say that it is permitted to fondle nubile girls on their breasts in order to determine whether they are fertile and after caressing and fondling, they clap their hands." Thus, the *mitnaggedim* brought the erotic theology of Chasidism back to earth in their claims that ejaculations and erections during prayer reflected a general collapse of sexual morality in the new sect.

Why did the *mitnaggedim* focus so obsessively on the sexual mores of the Chasidim? Perhaps they saw in Chasidism something uncomfortably close to home. Despite—or, perhaps, *because* of—their polemics, the *mitnaggedim* themselves practiced sexual renunciation and ritual exile from home no less than the Chasidim. Just as the Chasidic court attracted young men away from the family, so the new Lithuanian yeshivot became cloisters of sexual renunciation. But where the Chasidim addressed these problems by directing eros toward God, the *mitnaggedim* invested their energies in the study of Torah. For the one, the strategy was displacement; for the other, sublimation.

The twin movements of Chasidism and the Lithuanian yeshivot of the *mitnaggedim* shared a similar antipathy to sexuality, an asceticism as radical as any to be found in the Jewish tradition. On the very eve of modernity, the two most creative religious movements in the Jewish world turned toward sexual renunciation. Although such asceticism has a long history as one strand of Judaism since late antiquity, perhaps never before had it become so widely predominant. The legacy of this late-eighteenth-century renunciation remains very much with us and raises new questions about the history of Judaism's relationship to the body. □

THE TYRANNY OF THE MARKET

(Continued from p. 32)

The record of city growth over the last half-century graphically demonstrates that without the sustaining institutions that make interdependence morally significant, individual attention becomes fragmented in focus and delimited in scope. Vast social inequality is rendered invisible by residential separation, and an often shocking indifference to human misery and environmental degradation goes generally unremarked. As the various sectors of the life of the city's populace have become geographically dispersed, they have also become isolated from each other. Only a few city residents are oriented to the traditional urban culture in the arts, politics, intellectual and civic life, a culture which at its best served to make America's older cities the foci of a creative social life. Especially in the newer metropolises of the South and Southwest, the "civic infrastructure" of government services and of regionally integrating civic and cultural institutions is poorly developed. Significantly, religious associations are among the few institutions with large memberships that partly mitigate these tendencies toward segregated lives. Even the private pleasures and personal mobility of the affluent are tainted by some of the miseries long suffered by the urban poor. Everywhere the fear of criminal violence spreads gloom over the metropolis, prompting those with means to seek, in Tom Wolfe's phrase, to "insulate, insulate!"

In the face of the contemporary American city we can see the consequence of inadequate and neglected institutions and perhaps read a lesson for all society. But the quality of life in American cities would be even worse than it is were it not for the many institutions that have striven, often against the odds, to strengthen bonds of a nonpecuniary kind. Government, relatively weak and fragmented though it usually has been, has helped to keep alive many of the people and functions of little interest to the market. And the organizations of the "third sector"—such as schools and universities, religious organizations, theaters, museums and orchestras, voluntary associations of all kinds—have given the collective purposes of justice, mutual aid, enlightenment, worship, fellowship, and celebration some substance in metropolitan life. They have civilized

commerce and enhanced metropolitan life and have saved the market from its own worst consequences. But they have done more. They are points of "focal structure," places where people can meet to focus their attention and gain a sense of the whole of life through the cultivation of memory and orientation.

It is in such organizational—and physical—spaces that conflict can be sublimated into constructive argument. Here citizens develop new hopes through the practice of public conversation and joint action. The livability of our metropolitan regions depends on the balance between the public purposes that these institutions nurture and the purely quantitative thinking of the market. The search for dynamic balance between these purposes will, in a well-ordered city, take place within corporations and banks as well as around them. If the American Century represented the pursuit of always more and bigger regardless of the costs to nature or ourselves, with the dawn of a new era that experience now seems to teach a different lesson. The quality of life, like environmental and personal health, depends on cultivating integrated and balanced purposes. The cost is very high without it.

The Los Angeles basin, which covers an area nearly the size of Ohio, was once one of the most beautiful and is now one of the most economically and culturally dynamic regions on earth. Yet today there are few places anywhere in the United States in which governmental curtailment of individual choice reaches so intimately into the lives of citizens. On any given day, government, not the individual, decides whether factories will operate, and even whether—in a region dedicated to the ideal of suburban outdoor living—people can light up a barbecue in their own backyards. All this has come about in a desperate attempt to curb the life-threatening air pollution generated by the region's dependence on automobile transportation. Ironically, the draconian measures of government are directly traceable to earlier government indifference to, or encouragement of, the people's half-century-long pursuit of one of the American Century's leading goals: unrestricted individual mobility.

Individual frustration and collective distraction are the contradictory outcomes of the unlimited pursuit of individual purposes. Millions got to start anew, and many prospered. But what we can now also see, in Los Angeles and elsewhere, is the enormous social and environmental cost of growth directed by such narrow goals without the counterbalance of integrating purposes.

Americans have pushed the logic of exploitation about as far as it can go. It seems to lead not only to failure at the highest levels, where the pressure for short-term payoff in business and government destroys the capacity for thinking ahead, whether in the nation or in the metropolis, but also to personal and familial breakdown in the lives of our citizens. The time is ripe for a new paradigm, which we call the pattern of cultivation. This pattern would not mean a return to the settlement forms of the early nineteenth century, but it would be the attempt to find, in today's circumstances, a social and environmental balance, a recovery of meaning and purpose in our lives together, giving attention to the natural and cultural endowment we want to hand down to our children and grandchildren, and avoiding the distractions that have confused us in the past. What has for a long time been dismissed as idealism seems to be the only realism possible today.

But how can we pay attention to all of the problems that beset us? Even the experts feel more comfortable if they can distract themselves by holding on to simple measures of the situation such as GNP or comparative military strength. Fortunately, military dangers have lessened—we can expect continuing conflict in the Third World, but hardly of the magnitude of the Soviet military threat. But it would be foolish to replace a military-political fear of the Soviet Union with an economic fear. Indeed, an obsession with competitiveness against Japan or Western Europe can be just as great a distraction from reality as an obsession with communism. The whole argument about whether the United States is in decline or is as strong as ever is also beside the point and fundamentally distracting. Clearly we are headed toward a future in which a number of highly successful national or regional economies will coexist; rather than worrying about where the United States is in the hierarchy, we should be worrying about creating a humane economy that is adequate to our real purposes, and a healthy international economy that operates for the good of all peoples. As Václav Havel has been saying, we need to replace a politics of fear with a politics of trust. Trust gives us space for attention, even when what we have to attend to seems baffling, whereas fear drives us to seek distraction, the kind of reassurance that only big numbers can provide.

Money and power are necessary as means, but they are not the proper measures of a good society and a good world. We need to talk about our problems and our future with a richer vocabulary than the indices that measure markets and defense systems alone. Words like "attention" and "distraction," "cultivation" and "exploitation" may begin to encourage conversations in which we can define our priorities, our needs to strengthen existing institutions, and our needs to create new ones.

We need experts and expert opinions, and experts can certainly help us to think about the important issues. But democracy is not the rule of experts. It is basic to the education of citizens that they learn how to evaluate expert opinion. Much of high school and college education actually does give students help in this matter, but more could be done if it were acknowledged as a central task of education. In any event, evaluating the opinions of experts is only the beginning and not finally the most important problem. Weighing the moral implications of different options is what is fundamental. Here the citizen who has learned to pay attention in the family and the local community can generalize to larger issues. When the family is a school of democracy and the school is a democratic community, then the beginnings of such wisdom have already been learned.

Our institutions are badly functioning and in need of repair or drastic reform, so that if they are to support a pattern of cultivation rather than one of exploitation, we must change them by altering their legal status and the way we think about them, for institutional change involves both laws and mores. More than money and power, these need to be at the center of our attention. □

WINGS

(Continued from p. 62)

Committee is going to take this so-called diary too lightly. Admit it, you have lost."

Yes, we'd lost. We were genuinely upset. "Comrades, I'm sorry that my stupidity has gotten all of us in trouble," I said to my friends, looking at the passenger. "This lesson, as well as our own shattered future, will serve us right. Sincerity and honesty don't pay off in the adult world. We'll learn to be evasive and obsequious. We'll learn how to survive. At least, I will!"

My passenger stood up, crimson with all the wine and emotion. "Don't give up!" he said, shaking his fist. He stepped in front of the head conductor, snatched my diary from her hands and handed it to me. Her sticky thumbprint was on the cover. "Bravo!" I cheered. We uncontrollably began to applaud.

When we quieted down, the head conductor pointed to the passenger and asked me who he was.

"A journalist," I said. "An honest man. He's my passenger." She squinted at the glass of wine in front of him.

"If you don't get off the train this minute, I'll call up the militia in Ovruch to have you taken in for hooliganism and drinking on the railroad," she said. "I don't care if you're a journalist. You have assaulted a train official on duty. Look around you: none of these little bastards, with whom you have elected to side, are going to say a word in your defense. Get off the train."

He looked around. No one was looking at him. She was right. None of us were going to say a word in his defense. We were no fools. I told him that we admired him and would always remember him, but our courage had limits: we were scared. He winked at me. Then he winked at the head conductor.

"Comrade, if I were you, I wouldn't rush to push a man from the train without first having found out where he worked. You might just end up getting arrested in Ovruch yourself!" he said.

She only laughed: "Oh yes, of course. Please, forgive my stupidity! I didn't recognize you, Comrade General Secretary Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev! Get out!" She jerked him to his feet.

Yura T., our leader, rose to his feet. "What you're doing is illegal!" he told her. "And I don't like it when you call us 'kikes' either!"

"Oh, shut up, Yura!" I said. "Let's not get involved!"

"That's right!" the head conductor said. "And what's wrong with calling you 'kikes'?"

She walked out of the car. The next moment we heard the hissing of the emergency brake as she pulled it down. It was the first time anyone had stopped the train in our presence. We had been taught that only a fire justified pulling down the emergency brake: it took only six minutes for the inside of the moving car to burn out completely, and if the train was stopped, more than twenty minutes. She returned.

The train sighed and began to slow. She told my passenger to pick up his belongings and get out. He looked around, smiling uncertainly. He had drunk just enough to start feeling warm and friendly toward everyone. Then his face took on an angry, gleeful expression. The night was dark, but it was not unpopulated. We were only a couple of kilometers away from a small Ukrainian station. There was a telephone in the station office. By the time we were in Ovruch, he would have had enough time to talk with the Ovruch militia. I felt sorry for our head conductor. It was not her fault that she was so dumb. I walked up to her and offered her my diary. Everyone looked at me.

"Are you out of your mind?" she said.

"No," I said, "but my diary just doesn't belong to me anymore. It has your sticky thumbprint on the cover. Let it torment your conscience in the wee hours of the morning!"

She reached out to grab it, but I pulled back my hand: "I'm not out of my mind. Why would I want you to have my diary? Are you out of your mind?" Everyone laughed. My passenger slapped my back. He flung up his hands and made two V-signs. Everyone except the head conductor and I looked away. I stepped into my compartment and brought out the briefcase. "You almost forgot your briefcase!" I said.

"We are waiting!" she said.

He put his hand on her shoulder. "I'm not saying 'farewell' to you, I'm saying 'see you soon,'" he told her. She pushed him out of the car.

She returned and ordered us to get back to our cars. I told Yura T., our leader, as he was passing through the car doors, to quietly warn everyone that the militia would probably board our train in Ovruch, and that if anyone had stowaways, they should be dressed in our uniforms and look like us, because who can predict what the militia is going to be up to?

"Why?" he asked.

"Because now *I'm* the leader!" I said.

The train began to regain its smooth speed. I walked two cars down the moving train, to Veronica's compartment, and knocked on her door. There was no response. Then I heard hasty whispers, quick hisses, the rustling of bedsheets. I knocked again. "I need to talk to you!" I said. "It's important! Open up! I know you're in there!" There was no response.

I felt very sad, as always when a glimmering of hope turns into emptiness before me. "To hell with both of you!" I shouted. Let the militia find them in there, spending the night together.

I got back to my compartment and looked for a while at the thick darkness outside. Suddenly a strong fear made my heart sink. I started sweating. I got up. My legs were wobbly. I walked out, into the deafening metallic roar of the space in between the two cars, and pulled down the emergency brake on the wall. It went down limply, like a broken arm. The head conductor had already pulled it down. The emergency brake couldn't be used twice.

I returned to my compartment. There was a dying fire in the stove across the corridor. I reached out and shoved my hapless diary into its red-hot opening. I remembered that I hadn't slept for two nights and fell asleep.

I awoke just as the train stopped. It was still night. Outside, a dusty light bulb swayed softly in the slow Ukrainian wind. Someone was banging on the door of the car. My head was reeling. My eyelids were heavy. But I knew what to do. We, the conductors, had a cure for drowsiness. I picked up a pocketknife from the table and lightly cut my forefinger. Then I sprinkled the cut with salt from the box on my table. The pain, unbearable at first, subsided in a moment. Now I felt miserable and angry. The air in the compartment was sickening, it smelled like apricots and peaches. Someone banged again. I heard the doors opening in other cars. There were people outside. I got to my feet, picked up my flashlight and flag, and went off to open the door.

It was raining. The militiamen climbed in. There were three of them. I pointed them in the direction of the head conductor's car. "August. Flowers have withered," sang Edita Pyekha from the station office. "And I know that you like me, as I used to like you." Old women were selling baked potatoes, boiled corn, warm milk on the wooden platform. I bought a glass of milk, an ear of corn.

"Where's your home, sweet boy?" one of them asked me.

"Leningrad!" I said. "Ever been there?"

"Are you going home now?" she asked.

"I'm going home!" I said.

"That's good!" she said.

There was loud talk coming from afar. I waved the take-off flag to the engineer, but the train wouldn't move. I closed my eyes and began counting to one hundred. Then I waved the flag again, and we took off, heading northwest. □

TWO FATHERS

(Continued from p. 29)

someday have a home of my own and wish to own concrete mementos of my mother's life, my father lets the relatives pick through her closets and drawers like scavengers at a flea market. He lets them load their arms and pack their cars and take away her history.

Summer 1956. I find out that my father has sold our house and most of our furniture. He never asks me if I am ready, or how I feel about it. He never gives me the chance to say what objects have special meaning to me. It does not occur to him that I might think of the contents of our house as mine and hers, not just his.

Everything is sold before I know about it. At first, I do not understand. And then I understand. He is getting married. He gets married. His new wife is a Southern belle with an exaggerated drawl, Jewish but unschooled in Judaism, fifty-four years old but relentlessly girlish and charming—and self-centered to a fault. She is given to dramatic color-coordinated outfits and dyed black hair styled sleek as patent leather into a chignon at the top of her head. I am in my peasant-blouse-black-stockings bohemian phase. She and I have nothing in common but our mutual distrust. Her Southern baby talk is insufferable. She manipulates my father who dotes on her, serves her,

tolerates her domestic ineptitude, seems enchanted by her glamour and helplessness. She is to my mother as polyester is to pure silk. I hate my father's wife. It does not occur to me to hate him for choosing her.

They take an apartment. The apartment has one bedroom. There is a daybed for me in the foyer. I am a freshman in college. I don't need a bedroom just for school vacations, do I? It is clear the new wife doesn't want me around. What my father wants is not at all clear to me anymore.

November 1958. I am a senior in college. I call my father at the office and tell him I have to see him. I will leave after my last class and will arrive in New York around seven P.M. Where can we meet?

Since I've never before asked for a scheduled appointment and since I will be driving for four hours from Massachusetts on a weekday night, I think he will deduce that my business with him is urgent. In a wild moment, I even imagine he might ask me to have dinner with him. But that night, as always, he has a meeting. He tells me to come straight to the Rego Park Jewish Center on Queens Boulevard, and fetch him out of his meeting. We'll have our talk in one of the empty Hebrew school classrooms and when we're done, he will return to his meeting.

I drive for four hours and locate him in a smoke-filled room. He excuses himself and we find some privacy in a classroom with low kindergarten tables and little chairs. I sit in a little chair. He sits on the table. I tell him I am pregnant. My life will be ruined if I don't have an abortion, but I don't have the money. I don't know where to find a doctor. I am paralyzed with fear. He assures me that he will make the necessary arrangements. No moralizing. No scolding. But also no comfort. Straight to the practical issues: who, when, where, and how much. Then he returns to his meeting and I get back into my car and drive back to school.

Late one night, a few weeks later, I go to a darkened doctor's office accompanied by my father and his new wife. I hate having her along but my father insists we may need a woman in case there are complications. She acts as if we are asking her to rob a bank. Then she plays the martyred accomplice. There are no complications. The abortion costs my father $350 but I pay him back.

It takes me five years, but I pay him every penny.

I needn't dredge up other such recollections. You get the point. That's the Other Father, the one I have to reconcile with the good Daddy before I can fully understand myself and, most particularly, my relationship to Judaism.

In the years after my mother died, incident after incident left me feeling confused and betrayed. At first, I excused my father's behavior, blaming his maleness for his mindless insensitivity, blaming his new wife for everything else. Gradually, it became clear to me that "his behavior" was who he was. I lowered my expectations. It didn't help. I withdrew. I closed up. I stopped hoping. This might have been a manageable psychological problem if it had not become an untenable spiritual one.

Somehow, father and faith had gotten all mixed up; I could not separate them. I couldn't mark where one began and the other ended. Both were male-gendered sources of power. My religion was personified by my Daddy and I was socially enmeshed in a Jewish world controlled by Jewish men. Whatever honors I had been given or denied were granted or withheld by Jewish men. The creators of historical consciousness and the guardians of privilege were Jewish men like my father, often my father himself. When it suited his needs, Dad had taken me into his realms; I was *his* little scholar, *his* bat mitzvah girl. But when it mattered to *me* to be included, he had exercised his masculine right to shut me out.

In a matter of months, this man who was once my adored mentor had revealed himself to be self-centered, unfeeling—almost a stranger. Because father and faith had been so intertwined, it was only logical that when I broke away from the enchantment of my father, I also cut off my formal affiliation with Judaism. Merge the Jewish patriarch with patriarchal Judaism and when you leave one, you leave them both.

For years, I stayed away from organized Judaism, from the institutionalized Judaism of my father. I married a Jewish man who had never been bar mitzvah'd. I raised a Jewish son and two Jewish daughters but did not have a bar or bat mitzvah for any of them. I suppose I did not want those I loved to be covenanted in the faith of the father who betrayed me, the faith that left me out.

Over time, I rejoined Jewish life. But I have yet to deal with Daddy. The Other Father keeps getting in my way. □

HANDS

(Continued from p. 34)

prayers with *kavannah,* and who kept her own counsel. She is the great-grandmother whose image haunts me and my peers. I cannot fathom what thoughts she gave to herself. I only know this, that on Thursday night she joins me here in my kitchen.

Whose hands are these that rinse the vegetables, peel the onion, chop the carrots? Whose hands are these that stir the pot, mix and roll the dough? Whose hands are these that baste and turn, that test and check? Whose hands are these that join with mine? All my grandmothers crowd into my kitchen. My own grandmother embraces me and turns me toward all these nameless souls. They come close to me and then spread through my kitchen, filling it like the aromas from my cooking. And for an instant I am among them and I feel an eternity beyond time as strong as the ageless communion we invoke when engrossed in prayer.

They all depart, except one. She moves away slightly, and as she does, I understand that she would not object to any of this—the gourmet preparations, my counseling at the clinic, my work to advance learning for women, my writing—as long as there is this: our ingathering in the darkness as we prepare for Shabbat.

She leaves as I wash the last of the pots. I close the shade and shut off the light in the kitchen. The work, for now, is done. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 4)

democratic structures, while Israel's politics are stifled precisely by a proportional representation system that is so democratic it often cripples the state and prevents it from acting. Inability to tell the difference between the system extant in Israel and those dictatorships that have flourished for

many decades in Arab countries is precisely the kind of blindness that tends to discredit leftists of all shades. One doesn't have to be an apologist for the Occupation—*Tikkun* has been outspoken on these issues—to want Israel's critics to be able to talk about the reality of Israel in all its complexity, rather than to project a caricatured image that fits some lefty stereotypes but ignores Israeli reality.

The Left's betrayal of the Jews in the twentieth century is a long and complex story. Many Jewish socialists and communists found that too many of their own non-Jewish comrades turned on them and betrayed them, first in the underground struggles against the Nazis, later in the Left-oriented regimes of Eastern Europe. The American and European Left all too often denied that Jews were being oppressed in Eastern European regimes—and when they could no longer deny the abundant evidence, they simply ignored it.

The ultimate negation of Jewish rights came from the Left's attempt to deny the Jewish people the same rights to national liberation that the Left insisted on for every other people. Shames and Katzen use my claim that Israel has acted as the "public face" of Western ruling elites as reason to doubt that Israel is a product of a genuine national liberation struggle. But my point was that this role as public face of the rulers was forced on Israel by its relative powerlessness and the racist antagonisms of surrounding Arab states, just as the role of strikebreakers was forced on Blacks in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries by American capitalism, and could not reasonably be used to question the validity of their struggle for freedom. Moreover, what other oppressed group that sought to define its own path to liberation has the Left challenged in a similar way? When China invaded and occupied Tibet or sold arms to Pinochet in Chile, did the Left say that the Chinese were no longer leading a legitimate national liberation struggle, now that it could be seen that the society the Chinese had set up was undemocratic, repressive, and oppresive?

The fact is that there are elements in the Left who have managed to be apologists for every fascist and totalitarian regime in the world that manages to spout out a few socialist phrases to justify its internal repression. Why always the double standard toward Israel? It's one thing for us on the "democratic Left" to be very critical of Israel—we are—and quite another to seem to judge Israel by higher standards than we use for our pet liberation struggles (Nicaragua, El Salvador, and South Africa, to name a few).

Shames and Katzen seem to feel that it is important to distinguish between the fascism of the weak and the fascism of the powerful. But this makes little sense to most Jews. The fascism of the weak is often precisely what leads to our destruction—to what Isaac Babel called "the socialism of fools." For us on the democratic Left, the fascism of the weak deserves every bit as much condemnation as the fascism of the powerful. A Third World bully, a working-class bully, a Jewish bully, a feminist bully, a gay bully—they are all still bullies, and the fact that they are *also* oppressed is not good reason to let them off the moral hook, or to close our ears to the cries of their victims. We won't do that for the victims of Israel's oppression, even though we recognize that the Jews are an oppressed people, so why should we turn our ears from the cries of the victims of other oppressed groups?

Because Shames and Katzen feel the need to make Third World peoples always the innocent victims, they are led to the ridiculous position of including Israel in a list of countries whose activities contributed to Hussein's decision to take over Kuwait (do these people ever talk about the attack by Jordan on Israel in 1967 as "contributing" to Israel's decision to occupy the West Bank?) and insisting that the U.S. "virtually forced the war upon Iraq when it was desperately trying to negotiate a way out." (Do these folks remember when Saddam refused to meet with Baker in Baghdad in late December and early January? Just how "desperate" was their effort to avoid a war?) When will these sectors of the Left ever understand that in order to oppose American imperial ambitions one doesn't have to become an apologist for every two-bit Third World dictator?

Shames and Katzen are absolutely right to urge Jews to reconsider with whom they want to ally—and to suggest that it ought to be with the forces seeking peace and social justice. But just as early women's liberationists refused to subordinate the struggle of women to the short-term needs of the antiwar movement of the 1960s, it is unfair to ask Jews to subordinate their own legitimate needs to the "higher interest" of the Left. Instead, let the Left clean up its act, seriously address its shameful history of mistreating the Jews, and create a climate within which anti-Semitism is not tolerated. Far from this being a recipe to undermine the Left, it will be one that strengthens it. And it is only when the Left can rid itself of its own anti-Semitism that it can play a credible role in pushing Israel toward the peace settlement that *Tikkun* has been advocating since its inception in 1986.

To the Editor:

"The left" is dead in this country and the brand of politics fostered by *Tikkun* appears to be dead along with it.

It seems to me that "the left" is bankrupt and that its message is not only dated, but is a mélange of outworn clichés. "The left" seems to drown the air with words, words, words, a talkiness and wordiness that bores listeners and readers right out of their socks. But, above all, "the left" is nauseatingly sanctimonious and righteous. Its stale message is that it, alone, has virtue and merit and morality on its side. Some of us are far from convinced.

The editorial by Michael Lerner in the March/April 1991 issue of *Tikkun* illustrates each of these failings well.

Was the editorial wordy? In spades.

Was it apologetic and full of "leftish" clichés? It lives up to the charge in full measure. For example, it recognizes the long history of anti-Semitism, racism, and sexism in the Arab culture but, in accordance with "good, left doctrine" makes excuses for it because of the "shame and humiliation that Arabs [feel] under the heel of Western imperialism." It excuses Islamic fundamentalism "as merely expressions of the anger and frustration that Arabs feel." Indeed, it ultimately minimizes all of the blatant excesses of Arab culture by claiming that mentioning "the racism, militarism, or anti-Semitic aspects of Arab culture" is "beside the point." The main point of the first part of the editorial, if I can boil it down to a few words, appears to be that Israel must "do something" for the Palestinians so that Israel is not seen "as an extension of the West." Yet it argues that any "deal" between Israel and the Palestinians must be "guaranteed" by "total U.S. involvement in defending Israel from attack," thereby giving future "leftists" the opportunity to cite

this as patent further evidence that Israel is, in fact, only the "creature" of "Western imperialism."

The vice of Mr. Lerner's position is that it "forces" Israel to make an accommodation with the Palestinians, while totally involving the U.S. with all the dangers to Israeli security such an accommodation brings: a patent trap for both Israel and the U.S.

Mr. Lerner is justifiably horrified by the antics of the antiwar movement, but I am distinctly puzzled why he never noticed the antics of "the left" before. They are decidedly not new.

Mr. Lerner does not appear to understand that "the left" he seeks to appease is not really interested in any rational solution to the Palestinian–Israeli problem. It needs a passionate and emotional cause to sustain it, and that cause is fueled by "Israel bashing" and polite and not-so-polite anti-Semitism, the new and fashionable language of "left" movements here and in Western Europe for quite some time now. This is evidenced by the fact that "the left" is not even remotely interested in the patent horrors and abuses in most, if not all, Muslim and African nations.

Their "cause" focuses almost exclusively on Israel. It consists, almost exclusively, of romanticizing the Palestinians as "freedom fighters" and of excoriating Israel and the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank while pointing to Palestinian "shame and humiliation" (sound familiar?) to excuse their excesses; and of emphasizing what they call "the crimes of Zionism" and "Jewish power" over the press and Congress. Do you want proof? Talk to any Jewish student at UCLA or at any other university, for example, to find out what "the left" is really all about these days. I am distinctly puzzled why the crowd at *Tikkun* never noticed this before its readers began to complain about the antics of the antiwar movement.

Last of all, I am tired, very tired, of having "leftist" Jewish groups and "leftist" Jewish publications in the U.S. telling Israelis what they should do about their "Palestinian problem." What I really do want to hear, and what I believe Israelis want to hear, is exactly what the Palestinians and the Arab states in the Middle East propose to do to guarantee Israelis that any proposed Palestinian state or entity will not be a threat to Israel. I want to hear from the Arab states and from the Palestinians because I am tired of listening to the same old clichés from Michael Lerner and from *Tikkun* and from the same old tired "left" crowd.

Henry J. Shames
Santa Barbara, California

Jewish Self-Hatred

To the Editor:

Oh my. That article by Cherie Brown ("The Dynamics of Anti-Semitism," March/April 1991). Would you believe "most Jews carry inside feelings of terror and insecurity, and fears of imminent betrayal?" That these fears "show up in insomnia, in asthma, in a drivenness to constant activity—all rooted in a deep terror." (Here I always thought constant activity was a pretty good way to take care of yourself.) We learn that "the crippling impact it sometimes has on our lives is part of the way Jews are oppressed." And this momentous scientific survey: "I have yet to meet a Jewish person (even those who lead active Jewish lives) who does not carry somewhere inside an internal recording of self-disgust." Again with the bodies: "One way that this disgust gets manifested is in not taking care of ourselves and our bodies."

Hold still. Just one more exhaustively tested finding: "Rarely do Jews get praised by each other for the work that they do. We are good at pointing out the negative and forgetting to express the appreciations. Instead we abandon each other or viciously attack one another." Who *are* these people? Can I have lived eighty years and not noticed? After reading the article I did one little survey of my own. The cherished word "internalized" appears eleven times in the not-too-lengthy piece.

Dear Solemn Cherie Brown: Be advised that the only thing I internalize is what I eat. After a while (occasionally helped by Metamucil), it turns into the stuff that your article is made of, and I externalize it. Now pardon me while I rush off to inform Kirk and Mike Douglas, Oliver Stone, Barbara Streisand, Woody Allen, Beverly Sills, Sandy Koufax, Yehudi Menuhin, Paul Wellstone, Bernie Sanders, Ed Asner, Richard Dreyfuss, Noam Chomsky, Jonas Salk, Gloria Steinem, Saul Bellow, Mark Spitz, and a mess of Nobel Prize winners that the reason they'll never amount to anything is that they are overeating, out-of-shape, self-disgusted, crippled internalizers.

Lester Rodney
Walnut Creek, California

Cherie Brown responds:

Dear Suffering-from-Food-Going-out-the-Other-End:

Thank you for the most wonderful belly-laugh I've had in days. And what a relief to hear that Kirk Douglas does not suffer from internalized oppression. I guess it's only a coincidence that he changed his name, and that I didn't even know he was Jewish until I read your letter. Thank you as well for including my favorite: Woody Allen. You are right, Lester—films depicting Jewish mothers who hover in the sky over New York City (the "Oedipus Wrecks" segment of *New York Stories*) and featuring Jewish men who constantly seek out relationships with non-Jewish women (*Annie Hall*) have brought Woody Allen fame and success. But unfortunately they have also put before millions of viewers a distorted picture of Jewish women and Jewish mothers by denying them their characteristic strength and dignity.

Maybe there's a generational difference in the way that you and I view these issues that we could explore to the benefit of both of us. I can remember sitting at the kitchen table one day, listening to my aunt and mother ask my grandmother, "Ma, don't you *ever* feel bad about yourself or think that there's something about you that needs improvement?" And dear grandma answered, "No. Why is there anything about myself that I should feel bad about or want to change?" And there we were—my mother, my aunt, and myself—two generations of American-born Jewish women, who had all fought, from time to time, internal battles against feelings of insecurity—looking at one another with loving amusement and complete disbelief. Grandma, a very powerful and loving Jewish woman—a woman I was very close to, and who died two years ago at the age of 86—escaped from the pogroms in Russia and came to Cleveland, Ohio—alone—at the tender age of 12. Grandma certainly had her share of fears and insecurities in her life (along with many joys), but it never occurred

to her to consider that her fears or anxieties had anything to do with being Jewish or with anti-Semitism in the United States.

Many of the well-known Jews you mention have achieved success—or at least society's prescribed terms of success. And scores of other Jews—both celebrated and unknown—whom we can both be proud of have made important contributions in science, politics, medicine, sports, the arts, etc. But simply because people achieve fame or success doesn't mean that we know what lies deep within their hearts or what private fears keep them awake at night. The need to pretend that there is no insecurity—or to keep the fears locked within—can affect the most successful people in deep and lasting ways. Constant activity may be a pretty good way to take care of yourself. But *driven* activity, without the wherewithal to relax and enjoy life, is not healthy.

I'm glad that you took the time to write a response to my article. All of us "solemn" *Tikkun*ers can use a good laugh now and then. May you continue to internalize many more good meals.

Revisionist Jewish-Arab History: An Exchange

To the Editor:

In his response to my "Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History" (March/April 1991)—and perhaps in partial response to my earlier criticisms of the "neo-lachrymose" tendencies of his book *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*—Norman Stillman criticizes me for being "naive" about the fact that "one group of propagandists should be answered by another." Apparently he overlooked my statement: "Regrettable though it is, the bias that informs most writing today on Jewish-Arab history is, perhaps, unavoidable. Opposing parties in a conflict naturally blame each other for starting it."

Stillman argues, further, that I am "badly mistaken in thinking that hardline attitudes of many Sephardic Jews in Israel vis-à-vis their government's policies concerning the Palestinians are not rooted 'in accurate historical memory.'" To demonstrate his point, he briefly reviews the historical background. On Jewish-Arab history from 800 to 1250 C.E., his position accords with my own analysis: various social, cultural, and religious factors "combined," as Stillman puts it, "with a dynamic mercantile economy to produce a relatively open society." He then surveys the next seven centuries: "Things changed.... The spiritual, social, and economic climate of the Muslim world was profoundly transformed during the thirteenth century." Here, too, we agree: during the late Middle Ages, after about the thirteenth century, "conditions in the Islamic world," as I wrote, "in general deteriorated."

But this misses the point. The target of neo-lachrymose revisionism is precisely the *earlier,* more "tolerant," and, from the political, cultural, and economic point of view, more integrated period (which includes the so-called Jewish "golden age"). This revision came in response to the slavish devotion to the myth of the interfaith utopia on the part of Arabist historians. For this reason I concentrate on the early, formative centuries of the Islamic–Jewish relationship.

Scholars generally agree that persecution of non-Muslims dramatically increased from the later Middle Ages on. However, the question of whether today's Israeli Sephardim possess a "historical memory" similar to the Ashkenazic recollection of a much longer and more oppressive Christian persecution in Europe (culminating of course in the Holocaust) is, I think, still open to debate.

Stillman expresses dismay that I feature the writings of nonprofessionals and popularizers, whose neo-lachrymose reinterpretation flies in the face of the evidence. Rather than a sloppy and tendentious choice on my part, the selection is deliberate. These writers—Jewish and Arab—command a far greater readership than the more scholarly, balanced literature to which Stillman alludes. That, indeed, is the answer to Stillman's "inescapable question: What was Cohen's purpose in writing this piece?"

Mark Cohen
Princeton University

To the Editor:

Norman Stillman's reply to Mark Cohen ("Myth, Countermyth, and Distortion," March/April 1991) appears to be an objective historical account of the oppression of Jews in Arab lands—but it masks a hidden political agenda. Stillman seems to suggest that the rightward tilt of Oriental Jews is exclusively the result of their "memoire collective," informed by negative experience in the Arab world. Unfortunately, Stillman seems to be unaware of the considerable literature in sociology and political science on this topic. Disillusionment and resentment are widely cited as the prominent cause for the Oriental Jews' break from the Labor Party. It was their negative experience in the years that the Labor Party ran the country that prompted them to shift their support to the Likud. Indeed, it is this manifestation of "memoire collective" that unsettles present Labor leaders. In frustration, they lament: "For how long should we be made to suffer for past mistakes?" Stillman is oblivious to the actual political dialogue taking place in Israel on this question, and instead fantasizes that Oriental Jews were *always* right-wingers just waiting for the opportunity to publicly surface. "[Oriental Jews] refrained from advancing more conservative views because all of Israeli life was so thoroughly dominated by the Labor Party. Once they became more self-confident and assertive, they became a natural constituency for the right-wing Likud."

Stillman insinuates that discrimination against Oriental Jews may be a mere figment of their imagination: "Sephardic activists such as Yossi Yonah more characteristically espouse the golden-age myth as an apologetic response to both real and imagined discrimination by Ashkenazim in Israel." Wonderful of this Ashkenazic historian to acknowledge that at least some little part of the Sephardic experience might be real and not just imagined! Incidentally, I am unaware of ever having

Errata: Dorien Ross's name was inadvertently omitted from the cover of the March/April issue. Tikkun regrets the error.

Due to a typesetting error, two lines were deleted from Michael Lerner's March/April editorial, "After Iraq." The full sentence should have read: "If the Left could abandon its instinct to denigrate those who disagree with the Left, and instead try to understand what is legitimate in their perspective, it might be in a position to drive a wedge between Bush's postwar policies and the American people, who supported the war for far better reasons than those that motivated Bush."

espoused the golden-age myth as a response to anything, real or imagined.

What could account for Stillman's denial of the harsh reality of Sephardim in Israel, a denial which leads him to misread Cohen and to resort to vulgar discrediting of his arguments (e.g., his claim that "most of the examples Cohen cites are the works of relatively unknown, unprofessional, or undistinguished individuals")? Since the sociological data does not support Stillman's position, one is led to suspect a powerful political motive underlying his argument. Possibly by rooting present-day political and social attitudes on the historical past—in the "collective memory" of the Oriental Jews, accumulated over the centuries spent in Arab lands—Stillman is fulfilling an important apologetic task: to shift attention from the actual collective experience of Sephardim in the Jewish homeland in the past 50 years.

Stillman's work contributes to the commonly held perception of Oriental Jews as an obstacle to peace. Yet he does so subtly and obliquely, by paternalistically claiming to understand and sympathize (but not identify) with the background to their political inclinations. In so doing he dismisses and denies the socioeconomically based grievances of Oriental Jews, which have played an important role in shaping their political allegiances. Ironically, the purely impartial historical account ultimately emerges as an instrument of a very specific political agenda.

Yossi Yonah
Jerusalem

Norman Stillman responds:

No amount of caviling on Mark Cohen's part can obscure the fact that his article is a subtle form of the "golden-age myth" of Arab-Jewish history. Cohen has always felt uncomfortable with any treatment whatsoever of the negative aspects of Jewish life in the Islamic Arab world. The highly diverse selection of primary sources in *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book,* which he criticized for being "neo-lachrymose," is in fact quite representative. For even during the best centuries, the cordiality of interconfessional relations was tenuous. Even in the best of times, *dhimmis* (tolerated non-Muslims) in all walks of life could be—and indeed were—suddenly and rudely reminded of their true status. The fall of a *dhimmi* who had risen too high or became too conspicuous in government service could have disastrous results for his entire community. For example, the assassination of the Jewish vizier of Granada, Joseph ibn Naghrela, in 1066—that is, during the Golden Age of Spain—was followed by the wholesale destruction of the Jewish quarter of that city. It would be a distortion to overemphasize the insecurity of the Jews of the Arab world during the best centuries, as some of the propagandists Cohen has singled out are wont to do, and it would be an equal distortion to paint the image of an interfaith utopia as Arab propagandists often do. However, it would also be a distortion to gloss over the darker side of the reality, as Cohen insists upon doing. To be sure, a delicate balancing act is required here. And it is precisely this equilibrium that Cohen has failed to achieve in his overall assessment of the entire medieval period.

When Cohen ventures into the modern period, he is on even shakier ground. He cannot be faulted for not being familiar with the mindset of Middle Eastern and North African Jewry during the past two centuries: most of the significant research is very recent and diffuse, and the first attempt at a synthesis, my *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times,* appeared only a few months ago. He can be faulted, however, for allowing his presuppositions regarding the medieval period to become the basis for his theorizing on the modern era.

As to Yossi Yonah's comments concerning my original response to Mark Cohen: like many professional "angry young men," whose very existence revolves around activism for a political cause, Yonah cannot imagine that there are historians who are not motivated by a "hidden agenda" or "a powerful political motive." My observations on the strong right-wing trends among a number of Oriental Jewish communities prior to their arrival in Israel, and the reasons I offered for these views being muted during the first two and a half decades after their aliya in no way contradict the fact that they were also disillusioned with and resentful of the Labor government. It is quite true that much of the sociological and political science literature on the Sephardim's shift to Likud focuses exclusively upon their socioeconomic grievances. This, however, was an oversight that I would attribute in part to a lack of historical perspective.

Finally, I could not help being amused by the irony of Yonah branding me an "Ashkenazic historian." Those who know me and my family in Israel, Morocco, Europe, and America, and those who have worked with us in the Beyahad movement, in the Gishshur Pe'arim (Bridging the Gaps) Program at Haifa University, at the Office for the Integration of the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage in the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, or in the American Sephardi Federation will know why.

Norman Stillman
Binghamton, New York

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 Street, Oakland, CA 94619.

We at *Tikkun* deeply regret the untimely passing of Harriet Scott, a loyal supporter and friend of the *Tikkun* community.

Notices

Experience from the Front Line: Days with Jews and Arabs. Nilly Venezia, educator with the Jewish and Arab Community in Israel, is offering drama workshops in the United States in August 1991. For information contact: Nilly Venezia, 3 Sokolov St., Bat-Yam 59325 Israel. Telephone number: 011-972-3-5060-896 or Fax number: 011-972-3-923-4050. Deadline: July 21.

Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, New York's dynamic 1100-member Gay and Lesbian Synagogue, seeks a full-time rabbi with a minimum of two years congregational experience. Tikkun Box 30.

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All the rest is commentary.

תיקון

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