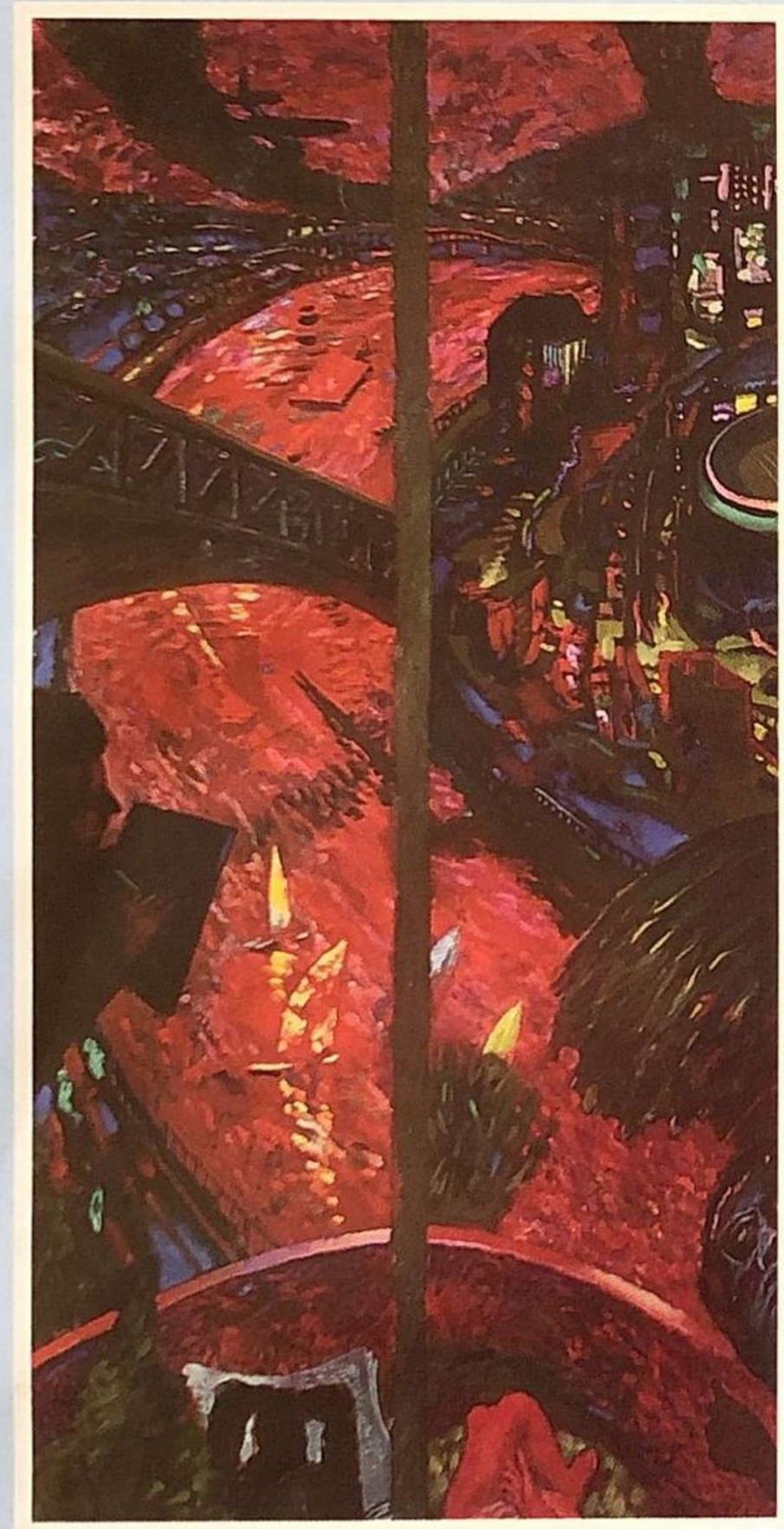
(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

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Morning Glories on the Day of Atonement

Celia Gilbert

Alone, at noon, I'm studying
the rampant blues that crowd
my neighbor's fence. In the depths
of the flowers I see
yellow stars and the black rumps
of honeybees bent
to a late harvest.

Yesterday in Brooklyn
five scorched, desecrated Torahs
were given a funeral.
We must have sinned against God
for once again his face is against us,
against the young children and parents
who pressed round the coffins
bearing the Torahs away.
The weeping rabbis recalled the martyr
wrapped in the scrolls set on fire by Romans.
"Rebbe," called his students,
"what do you see?"
"I see parchment burning, but the letters
fly free."

Letters I never learned as a child,
the *Shin* like a menorah without light,
the spike of the *Vav.* Tradition
had been lived and left behind by my parents;
for my brothers and me, nothing
but the knowledge we were Jews,
and a feeling of unease when we saw,
on this holiday, the empty seats
around us at school.
We were different again
from those who are different.

Unbelievers must invent meaning
and flesh out reasons
from circumscribed knowledge.
They can't see with an angel's sight
into the flames that curl
like those magical, black
Hebrew letters. The rabbis teach
even the white spaces between
are sacred with meaning.

To refuse to ask
is a refusal to believe
we will find answers.
I listen to the birds as if their notes
carried songs from the Temple;
watch the morning glories bloom
as if their open throats
would teach me what history is mine
if I deny this one,
holy and profane.

September, my birth month, month
of renewal, there is a connection
that ties me to paper,
bent like a scribe to the holy task:
one mistake and the universe staggers.
Though I have rejected the Laws,
I can't live free of the shadow
that falls on my shoulder,
on the chimneys and roofs,
on the morning glories that mass
along the simple strings near the kitchen.

Celia Gilbert is the author of two books of poetry, Bonfire *and* Queen of Darkness. *She has new work forthcoming in the* New Yorker, Ploughshares, *and* Southwest Review.

TIKKUN

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Letters

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

THE BOOK OF J

To the Editor:

It was a delightful surprise when *Commentary*'s biblical guru came out raging about *The Book of J*. Unable to kill it with kind words or lip service—it was already a bestseller—he was forced to give it a piece of his mind. But I still had a nagging thought: What if the book is dismissed with friendly compliments in *Tikkun*?

Yet I confess I knew that *Tikkun* would hire Ed Greenstein ("Doctored J," March/April 1991), who pleaded with me in person and in writing for a pre-publication copy of *The Book of J*. I admit I put his request on the publisher's desk, hoping he'd be startled awake when he found one of his idols, conservative critic Robert Alter, much criticized in the book. But what if Ed really understands this book, I thought, proving that this generation of biblical scholars could at last comprehend irony—and not only in the dead writers but in the living ones too. After all, the joke about Alter among Israeli poets is that he "knows no *doogri* (street idiom)."

Unable to imagine more than one kind of irony in either ancient or contemporary writers, these scholars are ready to throw pies (slapstick they know) at anything that challenges the conventional. And that usually means anything really new that may seem wrong because it doesn't fit expectations. But is there "wrong" when it comes to imagining a translation that responds to the Hebrew with a sensitivity to the shading of puns in English—from broad to deadpan? Are there "errors" in midrash and Kabbala, our imaginative tradition so trendily written about and so little emulated? Greenstein found "errors" in J's translated text and yet he fails to notice suggestions of an early Hebrew text composed one thousand years before the pious Masoretes. There's only one right way to read the Bible, right? Who's going to argue with someone who sounds like a lawyer when he says he takes a "pragmatic view of literature"? Politicians can be pragmatic—but is that what people want from

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literature? The conventional view at all costs?

Greenstein pretends there are no scholarly notes to *The Book of J*. The notes focus on the choices of English nuances, implying that most scholars ignore irony. It's one thing not to get the Hebrew right because you can't distinguish among ancient poetic idioms, but can we live with scholarly translations full of unconscious clichés?

The new conservatives try to kill midrash by smothering it with obsessive, academic attention. How did we lose touch with those American Jewish scholars whose spiritual strength allowed them some wit toward the sources, a Spieser or a Heschel? And how can we sensitize this new generation to literature again, now that they've denigrated it (Greenstein calls it "secular")? Even their own religious faith is weak, turning them into angry condemners—so removed from real life that they think Judaic studies is Jewish culture. And this at a time when a strong Jewish culture has been created in the Hebrew language, in Israel, by secular poets (from Bialik to Michael Govrin) who have played long and hard with the biblical text. How do you get through to our self-righteous bores when they write books to rope off poetry from prose and thereby think they have nothing left to learn from poets?

I'm relieved *The Book of J* gives them a chance to make angry faces, since that may be the only way this spiritually stingy clique will recognize themselves in the mirror. And what gets them most angry? Poetry. Greenstein wonders why poetry is missing in the J text—but by "poetry" he means the small, humorless portions, often identified as "primitive" material, such as the victory song of Moses. By reducing poetry to acrostics, Greenstein impoverishes Jewish literature in the same way as the Christian scholars who are fond of contrasting the New Testament to "primitive" Old Testament poetry. Still, Greenstein could learn some generosity from the New Oxford Bible (Protestant), which refers to the "Writings," more than a third of Tanakh, as "the poetic books"—bringing far more credit to the great Hebrew poets. And there's no text more poetical than J's, unless it's the prophets' books.

David Rosenberg
New York, New York

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Edward Greenstein Responds

To the Editor:

My judgment that David Rosenberg's translation of biblical Hebrew is incompetent—a view coincidentally shared by virtually all Hebraists and biblical scholars in print and in press—is supported by illustrations that, I maintain, are representative. Instead of arguing the "facts," Rosenberg fabricates a myth about my alleged hostility toward poetry and openness in the reading process. The allegations will at once be recognized as absurd by anyone who has ever read or heard me; read, for example, my essay "Deconstruction and Biblical Narrative" (*Prooftexts,* January 1989) or the first part of my book *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (Scholars Press, 1989), and see what becomes of Rosenberg's uninformed assertions. I was indeed "eager" to see *The Book of J* because I admired several of Bloom's essays on Bible published in the past decade. I was disappointed to find that the whole was considerably less than the sum of its parts and that Bloom's commentary was more closely linked to Rosenberg's travesty than it needed to be. There is something to learn still from Bloom's perspective; there is absolutely no value in what Rosenberg has done.

Edward Greenstein
New York, New York

Fifth Anniversary Issue: Nov/Dec 1991

Help Us Celebrate!

Here are five ways to join the celebration:

a. Send us a letter telling us how the existence of *Tikkun* has influenced your life or your thinking.

b. Buy a copy of the anthology of *Tikkun* articles from the first five years (more information on the back cover).

c. Become a Tikkun Associate (tax deductible donation: $100 or more per year).

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e. Set up a fifth anniversary fundraising party sometime in November or December—at your house or at a university, synagogue, or community institution near you. If you can raise enough money, we will send a member of the editorial board to speak. For more info, contact Erika Henik (415-482-0805).

Multiculturalism

To the Editor:

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese delights the intellect. Her clarity of mind and generosity of spirit were ever present in her article "The Self Interest of Multiculturalism" (July/August 1991).

The experience of most of our immigrant ancestors suggested no great sense of ethnic pride. They left an impoverished environment because of the fear of starvation, involuntary military servitude, and a numbing, class-induced sense of social inferiority. America meant more than a new beginning. It held out the hope of a new, prideful identity.

It was the twin paranoia of racism and ethnic bigotry that caused immigrants to crawl inward. In this sense, our melting pot was placed on a cold, back burner.

Fond memories of a foreign heritage are more lie than truth. The lands from which our ancestors came were little else than beckoning graveyards. The more recent immigrants from Central America, Haiti, and Cuba bear current witness.

Human beings may be more loyal to an organization, that provides stable employment than they are to a nation/state. The corporate logo now competes with the national flag for human allegiance. When national patriotism cannot provide job opportunity, income, and the dignity that comes with economic security, the tacit social compact between citizen and state is breached. The lunacy of Baltic separatism results.

In America, it's called multiculturalism.

Gerald H. Evans
Jupiter, Florida

The Middle East Peace Conference Begins

Congratulations to Secretary of State Baker, to Prime Minister Shamir, and to the various Arab states who have finally made possible an international conference on the Middle East. All of us who have worked for peace through these many years will be praying for the success of this conference.

The obstacles, however, are overwhelming. In order to get the parties to the table, Baker had to promise that the United States would not put forward its own substantive view of what a peace settlement could look like. Such a picture might show the Israeli public that Israel could achieve military security and still exchange land for peace. If guaranteed by a strong military commitment from the U.S., a peace treaty that allowed Palestinians a demilitarized state might appeal to many Israelis that promised a solution to the Palestinian problem. If the United States—still considered Israel's leading ally—steps forward with a detailed vision of an Israeli–Palestinian peace, it would generate considerable popular enthusiasm in Israel, and prompt Israeli citizens to demand that their government offer real concessions. Precisely because the Shamir government wishes to avoid any internal pressure to force accommodations at the bargaining table, it has insisted that the U.S. promise *not* to present its picture of what peace could look like.

Indeed, the conference is set up in such a way as to make substantive progress extremely unlikely. Israel will get its way on matters of procedure. After a largely ceremonial opening session, separate negotiations will take place between Israel and the surrounding states. But Shamir has reassured his constituency over and over again that there will be no compromise on the Golan Heights—and no compromise that would grant sovereignty or national self-determination to the Palestinian people.

If Shamir is telling the truth to his own constituency, these negotiations are unlikely to yield any serious changes in the situation beyond the "limited autonomy" for the West Bank that Shamir has offered in the past. This autonomy would allow Palestinians control over municipal functions such as fire and police services, garbage collection, and street repair. Shamir's autonomy plan would not allow Palestinians control over water and land resources, would not protect them from the increasing expropriations of land on behalf of Israeli settlers, and would not allow them to halt or restrict the massive increase in settlers envisioned by Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon. Perhaps equally important, limited autonomy would not deal with the psychological needs of the Palestinian people—chief among them being the need to feel that their claims to independence and national identity are finally being recognized.

Indeed the very process

Isaac Bashevis Singer 1904-1991

The *Tikkun* world is sad to lose the wit and wisdom of Isaac Bashevis Singer. While Singer immortalized the rich and complex shtetl life of Eastern Europe in Yiddish and then in English short stories, articles, and novels, he avoided the romanticization of ghetto life that has been central to Jewish nostalgia in America. Through the demonic and erotic he created a countertradition to the image of a monolithic rabbinic Judaism dominating the consciousness of Jews in Eastern Europe. His characters embody the complexities of human reality, at once struggling for spiritual truth and sexual gratification, for solidarity with others and individual advancement, for a way to live in the modern world and a way to hold on to Jewish authenticity. He treated the Holocaust as a catastrophe on the human level, refusing to turn its victims into saints or its meaning into a theological archetype. Singer's moral commitments were well reflected in his life. He explained his refusal to eat meat as a concern about health, but, as he put it, "Not my health, but the health of the chicken or cow." He will be sorely missed.

of negotiations is guaranteed to increase the Palestinians' sense of betrayal and abandonment. Shamir has made it a condition of negotiations that his government have veto power over those selected to represent the Palestinian people.

To assess whether what is being offered to the Palestinians is reasonable, you need only consider what Israel would have done had the Jews found themselves in an analogous position in 1947. If the British offered Israel a limited autonomy without statehood, or if they insisted that no Jews living outside of the UN-designated partition lines of 1947 could participate in negotiations for a regional peace, the Zionist movement would have unequivocally rejected these terms.

If the Palestinians accede to the Shamir demands, then, their acquiescence will only arise out of their relative powerlessness. Yet it would be wiser for Israel —the greater power—to act magnanimously rather than vindictively. To worry about the pride and sense of self-worth of Palestinians is not to indulge some trivial, moralistic impulse—it is, rather, a smart, self-interested move. It means making realistic accommodations with the Arab world, which has often acted as much out of a desire to restore dignity and to rectify past humiliations as out of a rational calculation of its material self-interest.

Meanwhile, the Israeli peace movement itself seems caught in a position of relative powerlessness—for reasons explored in our section on the *Tikkun* conference in Israel. Shamir will thus have a relatively free hand to redefine the contours of Israeli politics in order to portray himself as a moderate centrist. While publicly embracing the same rejection of the land-for-peace plan as a basis for negotiations, Shamir can now distance himself from his right-wing allies, who have opposed any peace negotiations of any kind. Shamir can play "good cop" to the ultra-Right's "bad cop"—and still maintain the hardline policies that have helped solidify Israeli control over the West Bank.

It would not surprise us to see Shamir seeking early elections—and then running as "the moderate" on the question of negotiations. By shifting the debate in such a way that the politically confused Labor party centrists are portrayed as the Left—thus marginalizing the actual doves in the Labor party, the Citizens' Rights party, and MAPAM to the far Left—Shamir would effectively remake the terrain of Israeli politics.

If right-wingers split from the Shamir government over any minimal concessions he might make in pursuing his "limited autonomy" plan, Israel would face upheaval of another sort: a new unity government in which the Labor party provides cover for Shamir as he tries to stonewall all internal political pressure to exchange land for peace. Former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other hawks in the Labor party support this direction, and argue that only a national unity government could possibly make any territorial concessions. Fearing the specter of civil war should ultra-rightist West Bank settlers stage an uprising against a peace-oriented government that exchanged land for peace, the hawks in Labor believe that only Shamir can make peace, and only with Labor party backing. But this argument omits a central fact of Israeli political life. Over and over again, with honesty and integrity, Shamir has publicly asserted that he has no intention of making any such concessions, and that he is deliberately steering the Israeli government away from anything of the sort. Rabin's faction stayed with Shamir in the last coalition government until even its members could no longer fail to acknowledge that Shamir had no serious interest in the peace plan that he himself had launched. Presumably they would join a new coalition government in order to provide Shamir with the flexibility to negotiate, and would only quit once it was again made clear that Shamir really intends to stick with his public pronouncements.

There are people in the Labor party who believe—with Secretary of State James Baker—that the mere fact of attending negotiations will create an unstoppable dynamic toward peace that will push Shamir much further than he intended to go. Many right-wingers share this belief and will do everything they can to protest the negotiations. I hope Baker is right, but I very much doubt it. Absent a specific plan strongly backed by the U.S., and absent a Palestinian leadership more capable of allaying legitimate Israeli security fears than the leadership of the PLO can, most Israelis will be very skeptical about the negotiation process. And they will be correspondingly inclined to accept Shamir's assessments as "realistic" and even "moderate." We in the U.S. who witnessed five years of American negotiations with the Vietnamese before anything serious was put on the table will not be shocked if the current negotiations lead nowhere fast.

Meanwhile, using the cover of "peace credibility" afforded by the negotiations, the Israeli government is greatly tightening its hold on the Territories, providing massive economic incentives to encourage new settlers. The negotiations may be remembered more for providing a respite from pressure on Israel to restrict settlement than for any other concrete accomplishment.

As the Occupation continues, so too does the torture. It's hard even for those of us who oppose the Occupation to really admit to ourselves that torture is an integral part of Israeli rule in the Territories. I've read the B'Tselem report (some of whose findings are summarized in this issue of *Tikkun*) over and over again. Still, when I hear someone saying that Israelis are engaging in

torture my back goes up and I want to say "It's not true." But it *is* true, and the Jewish people both in Israel and around the world must acknowledge what is being done in our name.

So, happy as we are that negotiations have begun, we have serious doubts about where they will lead. Under current conditions, they will likely continue to delay the fateful moment when Israel realizes that there is no solution, no way of bringing peace and stability and security for Israel, other than to recognize the Palestinian people and allow them to choose their own representatives. Israel must negotiate an arrangement directly with these Palestinians that meets their needs for national self-determination within the confines of a demilitarized state that provides Israel with all the necessary security arrangements. Short of that, even a "successful" peace conference will only be a recipe for continuation of the conflict in the years ahead.

★ ★ ★

No To Clarence Thomas

Conservatives in the Senate never had any problem opposing Supreme Court nominees whose politics they disagreed with. After all, the Constitution empowers them to approve or reject such nominees, and since they are elected to represent their constituents, they find it perfectly reasonable to base their decision on whether the nominee will help to build a world that conforms to their vision of the world they want. But liberals in the Senate have often been afraid to fight for their specifically political vision, and instead have thought that the only legitimate objections concern the candidate's qualifications—whether s/he really understands the laws and is not so far out of the consensus that s/he will break with previous Supreme Court decisions.

No wonder, then, that liberals always appear wimpy and without backbone. While they are desperately trying to legitimize themselves by *avoiding* a discussion of their real political vision—as though anyone outside the Beltway cares about whether or not they have maintained "appropriate decorum"—conservatives use these opportunities to educate the public about their critique of liberal politics. The outcome is by now numbingly familiar: Liberal support declines and then some Democrats begin to argue that they would be wiser to modulate their position even more, to appear more conservative, moving towards the "political center"; and the Democratic establishment usually plays along, failing all the while to understand that these very actions are what *creates* Republican ideology *as* the center and no longer as the Right.

The Clarence Thomas nomination could provide the perfect moment for Democrats to break out of this cycle of self-defeat with a spirited defense of liberalism. But in order for that defense to work, liberals are going to have rethink part of their approach.

We are strong supporters of affirmative action, choice, and the full array of economic entitlements and political rights that have been enshrined in the liberal/progressive program. But we also understand why many Americans, though they *agree* with many progressive positions on economic entitlements and political rights, feel that the liberal program doesn't really speak to their deepest needs, their deepest fears, their deepest pains. What liberalism amounts to today is little more than the belief that the competitive marketplace is fine, but that its worst effects need to be rectified by creating a stronger "safety net" for those most direly affected. Yet this belief leaves out an understanding of how the middle class is also a victim of the normal workings of capitalism.

Liberals seem to be unaware that for most middle-class people the deepest level of deprivation in contemporary America is a deprivation of meaning—the way that the society tends to undermine our sense of rootedness in a purposeful life, and to replace that sense with the "equal opportunity" of all of us to make it on our own, as solitary monads of achievement. Liberals seem to be great at advocating this doctrine of equal opportunity. Yet for most Americans it is not the opportunity to "make it" economically that feels most absent, but rather the opportunity to make sense of their lives and connect with others in an ethically grounded community.



Clarence Thomas with liberal Democratic Senator Joseph Biden, chair of the Judiciary Committee.

As several of the participants in our roundtable on the Thomas nomination argue, the language of equal opportunity reinforces the meritocratic fantasies that figure so prominently in the consciousness of most Americans. It's only a short step from such thinking to self-blame: If it's only some specific groups who need affirmative action to repair the ways that they have been wronged, the rest of us have no one but ourselves to blame for our unhappy life situations. "Take responsibility" is a refrain that echoes through our culture, from the psychotherapists to the ideologues of capitalism, urging us to remember that if the world doesn't work for us, it's probably because *we* have screwed up somehow.

The real task of liberal politics is to decrease this self-blaming by helping people understand how the isolation that they experience, the instability in family life, the crisis in friendships, the sense that self-interest has replaced commitment to others—all these are inevitable consequences of the competitive marketplace and the dog-eat-dog quality of our economic and political arrangements. To the extent that people understand that their personal problems have been shaped by larger social forces, they can decrease self-blaming and feel more entitled to struggle for the kind of world they really want. Ironically, the liberal worldview, particularly the way it frames the issue of affirmative action as one that assumes that others *have* had a fair opportunity, accentuates self-blame. No wonder, then, that many Americans feel disrespected or disliked by the liberals—and respond by voting for the Right.

Thus in order to defend liberalism we have to begin to redefine its politics. I oppose the Thomas nomination because his legal decisions will help to create and reinforce a world based on individualism and competitiveness, a world that has led to the disintegration of families and friendships and solidarity among peoples, a world that is filled with pain and self-blame and isolation and political paralysis. Yet I fear that we are in store for a rerun of the predictable liberal–conservative debate, with the predictable results: an acceleration of the already rapid decline of liberalism in the United States.

★ ★ ★

Non-Attachment in Judaism: The Meaning of Sukkot

While various Eastern religious practices develop an attitude of detachment from daily life and see it as an arena of illusion and deception, Judaism preaches a more complex message: rejection of and non-attachment to the world as constituted, but deep attachment to the possibility of transforming it.

Judaism was born as the religion of a slave rebellion against oppression—and its holidays are meant to reawaken us to the possibility that everything in the social world can and should be different. So while it shares with other religions a focus on the mystery and grandeur of the universe, to be daily celebrated and rejoiced in, its uniqueness lies in integrating into that celebration the injunction to remake the world: "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue."

One of the main obstacles to taking such an injunction seriously is the array of subtle pleasures and enticements available to those who can "make it" within the arena that various imperial powers have set up for us. When the ruling classes of the world have not used Jews as scapegoats, they have implicitly offered us (and many others) an alluring deal: "If you keep quiet about what you see is wrong and corrupt in the present order of things, you can have a cut of the wealth and power that we have amassed. After all, you can't change things anyway, so why not go along, get a share for yourself, and keep all this pious talk about *tikkun olam,* world transformation, to your religious prayers and out of your daily real-world activities."

The Jewish holiday of Sukkot, the harvest "Thanksgiving" holiday that runs this year from Sunday night September 22 through Monday September 30, is our rejection of this deal. We are commanded to construct and dwell in a flimsy temporary dwelling, a sukkah, similar to that in which our ancestors dwelt in the desert. The sukkah is a practical lesson in non-attachment to the material world—an eight day meditation-in-practice that helps us remember that no material goody can really give us security, that real security comes only from remaking the world in a just way. Until that remaking has been accomplished, eating and sleeping in the sukkah helps us identify ourselves with the homeless, with those who sleep with no roof over their heads. Detaching ourselves from our material possessions gives us a strong reminder that the struggle for justice may well require us to give up all of what we have and all that we have achieved.

It's not that the goodies of this world are *essentially* evil and therefore to be shunned, but rather that they are typically used in the service of the denial of death and to prevent us from hearing the cries of the oppressed. Sukkah-dwelling shatters the self-deceptive security mechanisms that we have built around us to hide from ourselves the fragility of our lives and our identity with all who are still impoverished or downtrodden. This Jewish "Thanksgiving" holiday reminds us of the need for *tikkun olam*—and the need to create a shelter of peace around all of God's creation. □

The New No-Man's Land: The Changing Face of Psychotherapy

Ilene Philipson

Psychotherapy is in tumult. Professional publications tell of a "mental health care revolution" in which the state increasingly abdicates responsibility for funding of services, insurance carriers deem psychological treatment an unnecessary luxury, and the independent practitioner is threatened with occupational extinction.

Over the course of the past decade, federal, state, and local monies for virtually every form of mental health service have been decisively reduced. Not only for the poor but for much of the working class, there are simply no affordable mental health services available. Even in the case of drug addiction, a problem that is presumably of the highest priority in our society, clients often have to wait months for any form of treatment, due to understaffed clinics and huge waiting lists. Only when an individual becomes dangerous—suicidal or homicidal—can the few remnants of the community mental health system be brought to bear quickly. Even then, the system offers at best a few days of hospitalization, antipsychotic or antidepressant medication, and release back into the community with little more than a prescription and an appointment with a psychiatrist in a month or two to monitor the medication's effects.

That mental illness contributes significantly to mounting homelessness, some violent crime, and drug and alcohol addiction does not seem to galvanize politicians into supporting mental health services. Instead, our tolerance for bizarre, confrontational, and violent behavior on our streets and in public places is simply forced to expand.

Although the state supports the use of psychoactive drugs for the treatment of psychological problems, it is clear that it has virtually abandoned any commitment to or interest in psychotherapy. Clearly the idea of funding a process that may take weeks, months, or years is unpalatable when many local governments teeter on financial collapse and when the omnipresent quick-fix of drug therapy is advertised as a cost-saving alternative. Yet it is not only those who look to the state for help who are affected by this narrowing vision. As health care costs in general have skyrocketed, insurance carriers have progressively cut back on reimbursements to the private practitioners who traditionally minister to the working and middle classes.

"Managed health care"—the health maintenance organization (HMO) or preferred provider organization (PPO)—is the means by which increasing numbers of people are obtaining health services. These organizations also view psychotherapy as a treatment they can ill afford to support. Typically they allow their subscribers five to ten visits with a psychotherapist, occasionally as many as twenty, but not more. After one to four months, if a psychological problem is not resolved, there is no appeal, no further help. While this sort of stance toward physical illness would be incomprehensible, it has become routine in the treatment of psychic disorder.

Curiously, however, as public and private funding sources for psychotherapy services have radically declined, the number of people becoming psychotherapists has radically increased. In the past fifteen years the number of clinical psychologists in the U.S. has almost tripled, clinical social workers have more than tripled, and marriage and family counselors have experienced almost a seven-fold increase. Psychiatry has not experienced any appreciable increase, but neither is it emphasizing psychotherapy as the mainstay of its professional identity. Rather it has undergone a process of "remedicalization," and offers psychopharmacology as its hallmark.

As the number of practitioners continues to increase and the funding for their services by both the state and private insurance carriers decreases, psychotherapy as an occupation seems to become less and less attractive to men. In fact, men are simply not entering the profession. While only 10 to 15 years ago men and women entered clinical psychology programs at equal rates, at the current rate of change it can be estimated that by the year 2004, 80 percent of all doctorates in clinical psychology will be obtained by women. When we add the facts that clinical social work and marriage and family counseling

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have always attracted more women than men, and that most of the relatively few psychiatry residents who opt for training in psychotherapy are women, it becomes clear that the field of psychotherapy is becoming a world without men.

Conventional wisdom gleaned from other fields that have become feminized indicates that when men abandon an occupational category the field becomes less remunerative and lower in status. There seems to be little reason to believe that psychotherapy will differ from this pattern, particularly given the ever-increasing competition within the field, the shrinking job market, and a growing belief within psychiatry, and perhaps the public in general, that drugs offer a better chance for therapeutic cure than talking.

This transformation in the field of psychotherapy, an institution in decline and increasingly populated by women practitioners, mirrors changes in the contemporary family—an institution in decline and increasingly populated by mothers parenting alone. I believe that the feminization of psychotherapy reflects larger changes regarding the relative responsibility of men and women in society to provide intimacy and what sociologist Arlie Hochschild has called "emotion work." Men's abandonment of the psychotherapy profession—like their abandonment of families—exacerbates the widely held belief that it is women and not men who are responsible for tending to and ameliorating our emotional pain and psychological problems. Because our society denigrates this kind of emotion work, women therapists—just as women in families—are finding it increasingly difficult to be supported economically for the work they do.

Both in theory and in practice, psychotherapy maintains a close relationship to contemporary family life. Adults frequently seek out psychotherapy with the desire to repair the psychic injury they experienced in their families in the past, to work out the problems they still have with family members, or to mourn the loss or absence of intimate relationships; children often are referred to psychotherapy because of their inability to cope with problems in their families.

Over the past two decades American families—and the families of psychotherapy patients have been no exception—have increasingly been characterized by the absence of fathers, whether due to divorce, separation, or, more than ever, single motherhood in which a father has never been present. As the literature on the feminization of poverty, divorce, and physical and sexual abuse within the family suggests, the population from which psychotherapy clients emerge undoubtedly has experienced the effects of what sociologist Jessie Bernard calls the "fall of the good-provider role." Writer Barbara Ehrenreich terms it "the collapse of the breadwinner ethic" for men and refers to their concomitant "flight from commitment":

> By the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, adult manhood was no longer burdened with the automatic expectation of marriage and breadwinning. The man who postpones marriage even into middle age, who avoids women who are likely to become financial dependents, who is dedicated to his own pleasures, is likely to be found not suspiciously deviant, but "healthy."

Bernard dates the demise of the good-provider role to the same period and shows that the percentage of working men with a positive attitude toward marriage decreased dramatically between 1957 and 1976, from 68 to 39 percent. During the same period, she points out, the proportion of working men who found having children "burdensome and restrictive" more than doubled, from 25 to 58 percent.

Certainly men's shifting attitudes toward commitment and breadwinning can't explain all the changes in American families during the past two decades. The widening gulf between rich and poor, the decline of the family wage, women's participation in the labor force, shifting sexual and cultural norms, and feminism are critical to understanding how family life has altered. Nevertheless

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—**Gary Kelly,** Association for Humanistic Psychology

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a crucial fact remains: As the nuclear family disintegrates, it is women who are left with the emotional and economic responsibility for rearing children on their own.

It is estimated that two-thirds of first marriages now end in separation or divorce, and only 9 percent of American homes fit the breadwinning model of a working husband, a housewife, and children. A quarter of all American children now live in single-parent families; in 1960, only 9 percent did. It is estimated that more than half of all children in the U.S. will live in a single-parent household at some point before age eighteen. Of these, 89 percent will live with their mothers; 9 percent will live with other relatives such as grandmothers, and 2 percent will live with their fathers. Thus the term "single parent" serves to obscure the fact that "single parents" are typically women.

From 1960 to 1980 the average number of years that men between the ages of 20 and 49 spent in families with young children declined 43 percent (from 12.34 years in 1960 to 7.0 in 1980). In 1987, 9.4 million women were rearing children whose fathers were not living in the household. This represents an increase of 7 percent just since 1985, and almost 100 percent since 1970. Most women raising children without fathers in the home receive no child-support payments. Yet even for women who have been awarded support, 25 percent do not get the full amount of that support, and 24 percent receive nothing at all.

Emotional support seems to be lacking as well. Sociologists Frank Furstenberg and Kathleen Mullan Harris have shown that "close to half of all children living apart from their fathers had not seen them in the previous year.... And less than half had ever been in their father's home." Their study concludes that biological fathers increasingly see their responsibility to their children solely as a function of their relationship to the children's mother. If that ends, according to Furstenberg, "the paternal bond usually withers within a few years too."

The absence of the "good-provider role," however, may not only apply to men's literal abandonment of families. It may also speak to the sexual and physical abuse adult males inflict on adult women and children of both sexes. Although it is difficult to know with any precision how much violence occurs within families, studies show that about one in four women is physically abused by her husband or male partner. Almost a quarter of adults report having been sexually abused as children. Two-thirds of the victims were girls, and over 90 percent of their abusers were adult men. Of these adult men, almost a quarter were male relatives. While the absence of historical data makes it impossible to say whether or not these figures represent a change in the incidence of family violence, reporting of abuse has steadily increased over the past decade.

From this very cursory review of current trends, it appears clear that men's role in the family is undergoing a significant shift. While there are definite and significant exceptions—particularly among professional and highly educated men, many of whom seem increasingly to value their involvement in their children's lives—more and more women and children are being confronted with life *without* father.

Men's abandonment of the psychotherapy profession—like their abandonment of families—exacerbates the widely held belief that it is women and not men who are responsible for tending to and ameliorating our emotional pain and psychological problems.

The field of psychotherapy, meanwhile, has undergone—on a professional level—a similar transformation. While there is no evidence that men currently in practice are leaving the field, it is clear that men are entering at rates so small that psychotherapy is decidedly on its way to becoming a women's occupation. Thus, as adults seek therapy to repair the injuries stemming from their childhood or their current family life, and as children and adolescents look for assistance in struggling with their current family problems, they will increasingly find that the field of psychotherapy, like their families, is a no-man's-land. This is not to suggest that many clients will have had literally no contact with adult men; neither is it to suggest that for many, particularly those who have been abused by men, this absence wouldn't be a tremendous relief. But a large number will have had little sustained contact with men who have played an actively supportive and caring role in their lives.

The feminization of psychotherapy has made the experience of examining one's inner life by working with a caring and authoritative male therapist less and less common. Men who ideally could serve as benign, caring, and attentive role models represent a small minority in most clinical training programs throughout the country. Therefore a major helping profession, one that traditionally has served to counterbalance the effects of pathological aspects of family and society, is in the process of becoming an arena where—like the day care

center and the school—adult men are in short supply.

If the feminization of other occupations can serve as a guide, we can expect that men will continue to have a presence in the field, but only as remotely involved administrators, teachers, supervisors, and as psychiatrists providing medications, consultation, and hospital care. The hands-on, day-to-day work of psychotherapy will be more and more the work of women alone. For the majority of American children, who will live at some point before age 18 in a single-woman household, the experience of psychotherapy—if they choose to have it—will appear quite familiar. Men may come and go—as psychotherapists offering a quick fix through medications or as supervisors, administrators, and teachers who have some imperceptible influence over female therapists—but women are the ones who remain constant in their attention, willing to focus their interest and understanding on the intimate, dirty, and mundane details of people's lives.

In this growing no-man's land, it is possible to imagine how both in reality and fantasy, males can be seen more easily as the "other"—the abuser, the distant and longed-for father, the savior, the unattainable lover or boyfriend, the molester, the man who left one's mother pregnant and without support, the mythical but never realized conduit to separation, freedom, power. As adult men become more removed from family life, they become more subject to their children's unconscious fantasy life, untempered by reality. As psychotherapy becomes a women's field, clients will conclude that men are not or cannot be the ones to whom one turns for attention, empathy, or understanding. Women represented the "other" in the Freudian paradigm, based in the patriarchal family of late nineteenth-century Vienna, built upon the authority of the oedipal father, and practiced largely by men. Now, however, in the world of neo-freudian psychotherapy, which presumes the deterministic influence of the mother and is practiced largely by women, it may be men who represent the "other."

So what does feminization mean for the women who make up the majority of psychotherapy practitioners and for the tens of thousands who are currently training to enter the field? Undoubtedly the experience of becoming a psychotherapist for many women has resulted in a greater sense of self-esteem and personal gratification. But increased competition and downturns in the field due to cutbacks in public and private funding are stymieing women's desire to fulfill their professional goals. With fewer jobs available, they open private practices and compete with each other to find clients who can pay out-of-pocket. For those who do find salaried positions, their work is often in doing "McTherapy," seeing 30 to 40 clients a week under the auspices of preferred provider plans or HMOs, which have become the fast-food franchises of mental health care. They practice psychotherapy with almost no autonomy or control over the work process, and can often offer little real help in the five or six sessions each client is allotted.

Many women new to the field are experiencing what has been termed "surplus powerlessness" in the pages of this magazine. They see their work difficulties as personal and idiosyncratic, results of their own psychological problems or defects as clinicians. If they turn to their own therapists for understanding, they often hear the interpretations frequently applied to women who face problems with work: fear of success, guilt over perceived lack of competence, desire to fail, anxiety over being more successful than one's parents. Because the theories that underlie the profession of psychotherapy typically eschew social explanations of human unhappiness, therapists are only too ready to see themselves as the ultimate source of any professional problems they may have. Virtually no one in the field speaks of the implications of years of cutbacks in mental health funding on psychotherapists themselves, of the proliferation of free-standing professional schools that charge their students tens of thousands of dollars in tuition and then graduate them into a market that cannot adequately remunerate them for their services nor provide employment commensurate with their abilities and training. These women become healers who are not allowed to heal, professionals who want to help others in a world that accords little recognition or remuneration to psychotherapists.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we need to be fully aware of all the implications of having any part of our social world the province of one sex alone. As one of the premier helping professions, psychotherapy can have a tremendous influence on people, on how they experience themselves, others, and the world around them. I would argue that it is second only to the family in terms of the power it can have in shaping an individual's emotional life—the most intimate parts of his or her identity. The fact that men are no longer choosing this work, just as they are absenting themselves increasingly from families, suggests that responsibility for tending to emotional concerns, psychological problems, and people's inner core of experience will fall even more into the hands of women. These women, in turn, will often be underemployed or locked into routinized work that is poorly remunerated and of decreasing status in our society.

(Continued on p. 86)

The Wrong Arm of the Law: Torture Disclosed and Deflected in Israeli Politics

A Report from B'Tselem

B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, has recently issued a report on the use of torture in the interrogation of Palestinians during the intifada. B'Tselem's findings have caused an uproar in Israel. Based on interviews with forty-one Palestinians who were interrogated by the G.S.S. (General Security Service or Shin Bet), the report shows that a number of interrogation methods are routinely used that are prohibited by international conventions concerning torture and "cruel and inhuman treatment," as well as by Israeli laws banning the use of force to extract confessions or information.

Of the 41 Palestinians interviewed, 29 were from the West Bank and 12 from Gaza: 26 recently released and 15 still under detention. The interviewees had been interrogated in 10 different detention centers or prisons. Virtually all were subjected to the following methods of interrogation:

*insults and verbal abuse
*threats to harm the detainee and/or his family members
*sleep and food deprivation
*prolonged periods of painful confinement in small closet-like cells (and in some cases, closets or refrigerators)
*being tied for long periods of time in painful positions
*violent assaults by "collaborators" to extract confessions
*forced physical exercise
*cold showers; enforced sitting on a wet floor for prolonged periods
*severe beating on all parts of the body with fists, bricks, and other instruments

The B'Tselem report points out that Israeli law offers adequate protection against the use of force by government agents. There are also limitations on the admissibility of confessions obtained by force. The operation of military justice, however, especially during the three years of the intifada, has undermined the prohibitions and protections offered by the Israeli legal system. Detainees are held incommunicado for long periods without access to a lawyer—often for as long as two or three months. B'Tselem also stressed the G.S.S.'s wide-ranging powers and vaunted prestige in an Israeli political order that provides no corresponding framework of public accountability or scrutiny. The Israeli judiciary, meanwhile, makes it extremely difficult to challenge a coerced confession in court. Such conditions create a context in which the mistreatment of detainees can go unchecked. The report did not find a single case, for example, where military judges used their authority to place restrictions on the Shin Bet, whether by allowing detainees access to a lawyer, restricting the period of detention, or querying a confession.

The report also charges that the Landau Commission, which had been set up by the Israeli government to investigate previous allegations of misconduct by the Shin Bet, has contributed to the atmosphere of tolerance. B'Tselem argues that the Landau Commission condoned the use of what it called "moderate physical pressure." By removing the absolute moral taboo against torture, the Landau Commission opened the way to interrogation practices that are not allowed in democratic societies. And by placing its "guidelines" for approved interrogation techniques in a secret, unpublished part of its report, the Landau Commission ensured that the public would never know what measures are being permitted in its name. Such procedures widen the net of secrecy: The B'Tselem report describes the likely knowledge and complicity of others (such as prison staff, police, soldiers, doctors, judges) in human-rights abuses and their concealment.

Not one of B'Tselem's interviewees was found guilty or even suspected of the type of serious "hostile terrorist activity" for which the Landau Commission justified the use of "moderate physical pressure" in interrogation. The report found no apparent correlation between the intensity of interrogation and the seriousness of the alleged offense, or even whether the subject was charged.

Everyone interviewed was subject to some form of ill treatment. All except one of the subjects, for example, were physically beaten. There was no evidence, however, that special implements or machinery had been used to inflict pain. Only eighteen of the seventy-one interviewees stood trial, all for light offenses. Five still await trial. Seven received administrative detention orders, and eleven were released without trial. The most severe sentence was forty months of imprisonment.

"I haven't read the B'Tselem report. I don't know them and don't want to know them. They betray the people of Israel and the State of Israel; they're serving our enemies. Since they're traitors, they weren't created in the image of God."

Of course, reliable information on such abuses is scarce, as the authors of the report are quick to acknowledge. Victims' memories are not always accurate, and they can be suspected of exaggerating for political reasons. There is seldom external evidence beyond the detainee's own testimony. Yet the internal consistency of such testimony, along with reports from other human-rights organizations and experienced lawyers, suggests that the report's overall findings are accurate. In addition, the details of the five cases of death during detention as well as the instances in which interrogating officers have been publicly prosecuted would also seem to corroborate B'Tselem's findings.

After two months of public controversy surrounding B'Tselem's report, *Ha'aretz* correspondent Vered Lamm interviewed several key figures on the Israeli Right regarding the reports of torture. Here are some of the responses.

RABBI SHLOMO GOREN (former chief rabbi of the Israeli Army): I haven't read the B'Tselem report. I don't know them and don't want to know them. They betray the people of Israel and the State of Israel; they're serving our enemies. Since they're traitors, they weren't created in the image of God.

That's a grave thing to say.

What can I do? There are people who have dissociated themselves from the image of God. Can one say that the Nazis were created in the image of God? Dedi Zucker [MK from RATZ, the Citizens' Rights movement, and cofounder of B'Tselem]—even though he served in the IDF, his goal is to destroy the state.

Do you rule out the possibility of there being a shred of truth in the reports?

I trust our Jewish officials. Jews are eternally merciful. They don't apply excessive force where there's no need to, and if they apply force, it's defensive force, force that should be applied so we don't end up with another Holocaust. The Arabs want to bring another Holocaust upon us.

But isn't torture of prisoners against the law?

How so? Any law that serves the interests of the people of Israel is a good law. A law that's contrary to the interests of the people doesn't exist as far as I'm concerned. But I don't think anyone broke the law.

Doesn't injury to human rights endanger democracy in Israel?

I've gone through the whole Torah, the Talmud, the Shulhan Arukh, and the Rambam, and I haven't found this commandment that's called "democracy." I studied philosophy for five years and even Plato and Aristotle rule that of all the kinds of regimes that can exist, the democratic one is the worst.

LIMOR LINYAT (member of the Likud Central Committee): I haven't read the B'Tselem report. I feel that if I read what they've written, I'd become a partner to the moral abomination that this group represents. It's hard for me to digest the idea that Jews would be a fifth column in their own country. I find it hard to understand how Jews go out and inform on other Jews.

Do you agree that the Right has an image problem if it appears that it doesn't put human rights at the top of its concerns?

The Right concentrates on the rights of the Jews. We established this state in order to safeguard *our* rights. The right to live in security, for instance. I don't suggest that we should trample on others' rights, but one must call a spade a spade: Zionism and rights don't always go hand-in-hand. The very establishment of this state is an affront to the Arabs' rights. Arabs lived in Jaffa. They

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Trembling With Fear: How Secular Israelis See the Ultra-Orthodox, and Why

Noah J. Efron

The first weeks of the Gulf War were—for all the fear and uncertainty that left most of us just short of panicked—a time of rare and heady fellowship in Israel. Not since the Yom Kippur War had there been this much esprit de corps. Strangers on buses exchanged predictions about the war and tips about sealing rooms against poisonous chemicals. Phone lines sizzled after each attack, hundreds of thousands calling to check that family and friends were well and to exchange scraps of information about where the bombs fell. The ostensible solidarity extended to the government as well. The political *pilpulism,* and the ever-escalating cycles of sensation, recrimination, and character assassination that normally characterize Israeli public debate all vanished even before the first Scud landed. For two long weeks, Israelis lived without obvious acrimony.

The controversy that shattered this odd amicability was about Haredim and gas masks. Everyone in Israel received a gas mask in October and November. The standard issue for adults was a "passive" mask; these are fitted with two valves, one about the mouth through which exhaled air is expelled, and one about the nose, fitted with a charcoal filter through which purified air is inhaled. When the user inhales, the air pressure within the mask is lowered, and air is drawn in through the filter. Passive masks work only if they are sealed hermetically about the face of the user; if the seal is imperfect, contaminated air is drawn from the edges of the mask, instead of through the filter. As a result, passive masks are not effective for men with full beards; a beard prevents the mask from lying flush against one's face, and thus prevents an airtight seal.

At the start of the war the rabbinate issued an edict permitting Orthodox men to shave, citing *pikuach nefesh* (the duty to save human life) in the face of *safek sakkanot nefashot* (danger that may be life threatening). Very few Haredim chose to shave. Some said that they would shave after a chemical attack had already taken place, shrugging when told that by then it would probably be too late. Others said that they would not shave at all and that God would protect them. Still others said that it was a terrible choice to have to make, and that they were still undecided.

But it soon became clear that the decision could be avoided altogether. Men with full beards could safely use another sort of mask fitted with a battery-operated pump. The pump pushes air through the filter and into the mask, raising the air pressure and thereby preventing poisoned air from entering through the sides, even if the seal is imperfect. The IDF had already provided these masks to thousands who had trouble breathing, mostly children, elderly, and sick people. Leaders of the Haredi community demanded that Haredi men be given these masks. On the morning of the thirteenth day of the war, a spokesperson for the army announced that they would be. By that afternoon, a controversy raged.

There were two problems with distributing the masks. First, they are more than twice as expensive as the standard passive masks. Providing every Haredi male with the motorized mask would cost the country tens, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars. Second, there were apparently too few masks to go around. Not all the children or adults with respiratory problems had received these masks yet. To distribute these masks to the healthy ultra-Orthodox adults was to delay or deny giving them to people who needed them for medical reasons.

The outcry was quick and vicious. Labor Knesset member Avram Burg demanded that Defense Minister Arens intervene, preventing distribution to the ultra-Orthodox. "Malingerers—who are willing to rob the sick and the young of gas masks just so they won't have to shave their beards—should be put at the end of the queue," he said, noting that Haredim don't deign to serve in the army. *Ha'aretz* surveyed people in the streets about why the Haredim wanted the masks. Some attributed it to greed: "Anything that's worthwhile in this country, they want it." Others to immaturity: "They are

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just like children, so they want masks like children." Others were less charitable: A group of students I overheard in the humanities building of Tel Aviv University maintained that "the best thing for the country would be if there were a chemical attack in Bnei Brak now, before they get new masks. That would get rid of all of them at once."

Despite a professed Haredi monopoly on moral and spiritual virtue, most seculars believe that beneath the Haredi's black frock throbs unchecked libido.

This kind of hostility is not novel. Nowhere are Haredi Jews as feared and hated as in Israel. Israel is a bastion of a classic sort of anti-Semitism, aimed not against all Jews, but against the ultra-Orthodox, the overly *Jewy* Jews. It is an unsophisticated antipathy that, while not entirely unjustified, is imbued with fantasies of the Haredi faction poised to overrun the helpless secular majority, who are victims of nothing so much as their own tolerance, generosity, and good will. The Harid, in secular Israeli lore, is powerful and cunning. He (understandably, the archetypal Harid is always male) is a missionary tempting secular children from their parents, and a shrewd Machiavellian, wresting greater and greater control of the government. He loudly professes his own holiness, but his behavior belies debauchery. He claims concern for *Klal Yisrael,* all Jews, but selfishly advances the interests of only his tiny, insular clan, the rest be damned. He loudly demands consideration from the secular majority, but offers only derision in return. He is shameless, and he is dangerous.

The Myth of the Powerful Harid

A campaign poster for RATZ (the Movement for Citizens' Rights) in the last election showed an angry group of Haredim striding forward. The low camera angle made the crowd look as though it were ready to trample the viewer. The caption read, "RATZ will stop them." The party's television commercials sounded the same theme. Cameras roamed the streets of Me'ah She'arim and Bnei Brak. Haredim, many of whom object to being filmed because they believe that it violates the prohibition against creating "graven images," cowered before the camera or screamed, sometimes violently, for the filming to stop. This, of course, was what RATZ wanted to capture. The campaign commercials showed ranting Haredim and advised voters that support for RATZ was the best way to lash back against the ultra-Orthodox. In both ads, RATZ exploited the growing fear among secular Israelis that Haredim are getting out of hand, that they are too powerful. A common bumper sticker proclaims "*Ani Hiloni Hared.*" Literally, the slogan means "I am Secular and Trembling with Fear." Its appeal issues from a pun—Haredim are so called because they tremble with fear in the face of God, who is all-powerful. The sticker declares that, likewise, secular Israelis tremble with fear of Haredim, who are all-powerful, or at least too powerful. The fear is real, and it runs deep. Several friends and colleagues have independently told me about nightmares in which they are captured and held by Haredim and, in some instances, tortured.

Haredim do have more power in the Knesset than their numbers justify. This owes to the lamentable combination of a political structure designed to amplify power of small splinter parties and the almost perfectly even balance of power between the Left and the Right among secular voters. Because of the longstanding stalemate among the secular, the religious have provided the swing votes, essentially determining who forms the government, for the past fifteen years. As kingmakers, the religious parties have accumulated political power, and they exercise it with increasing sophistication and increasing cynicism. They keep civil procedures—marriage, divorce, etc.—in the hands of the rabbinate, they pass laws limiting infractions of Halacha in public places, and they claim an ever larger proportion of public sums for yeshivot and other religious institutions.

But the religious parties are *less* powerful than they are perceived to be. Witness the controversy last fall over four new religious laws: (1) a law preventing certain bus lines from operating within cities before the end of the Sabbath; (2) a law preventing sexually explicit advertisements in public places; (3) a law prohibiting the husbanding of pigs; and (4) a law abolishing committees for authorizing abortions in private institutions, forcing women who want abortions to turn to less convenient and less discreet committees in public hospitals. Yitzhak Shamir had promised passage of these laws, in exchange for support by ultra-Orthodox parties of a Likud-led government after the National Unity government that he headed was toppled last year. When formally proposed, these laws unleashed a gale of criticism, stormier by far than Israel's usual blustery debate. Opposition materialized in all sectors of the secular electorate. The left wing—led in concert by MAPAM and RATZ—was joined by a significant portion of the right wing—

particularly Raful Eitan's Tzomet party—in opposition to the laws. Dozens of rallies were hastily organized around the slogan "Enough Religious Blackmail." When Shamir began to make good on his promise and shepherded the laws through their first reading in the Knesset, many took it as a stark symbol of the Haredim's power and their willingness to exercise it.

But passage of these laws—when and if they eventually pass their second and third readings—will be no testament to Haredi political clout; if anything they highlight the *limits* of ultra-Orthodox power. The laws—although prima facie ferociously attacking issues at the core of the secular agenda—are in fact quite tame. Together they amount to little more than a symbolic gesture, and a fairly weak one at that. The law limiting the operation of bus lines applies only to certain lines and stipulates that rather than starting at five on Saturday afternoon year-round, they would never begin before nightfall. Bus lines that run throughout the day—some inner-city lines and lines in Haifa, for instance—are unaffected by the law. Thus, even after the law's enactment, buses will run on Shabbat in Israel. The law prohibiting sexually explicit advertisement in public places attacks—admittedly for different reasons—the billboards and posters that practice the same vulgar exploitation of women that feminist groups have called pornographic and fought unsuccessfully for years. (Sadly, the law is mute about Israel's bustling pornographic magazine and film industry.) The law banning pig farming does completely wipe out a small agricultural industry, and it is uncertain whether or not the government will ultimately pick up the tab. But it does not limit commerce in shrimp, lobster, or any other sort of nonkosher meat or seafood; its impact is surgical, destroying the pork trade but leaving the rest of Israel's robust *traife* industry entirely intact. Even the law affecting abortion authorization committees, the most hotly contested of the four, has little but nuisance value. No one who formerly had easy access to abortion will, after passage of the law, be denied an abortion.

I don't say that the laws themselves are justified or acceptable. Curtailment of even inconsequential personal freedoms for religious reasons is unsettling. Making it more difficult to have abortions—even in slight ways that can be easily overcome—is disgraceful. My point is rather that those who see in the passage of these laws the flexing of the Haredim's political muscle are mistaken. As Haredi politicians have themselves stressed, the laws represent an enormous compromise for the ultrareligious. They address only the slimmest portion of the Haredi agenda and the changes that they institute are more cosmetic than anything else. If the Haredim were running the country, not only would all buses cease to

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operate on Shabbat, but so too would private cars. In a Haredi state, not only would all representations of explicit sexuality be banned, but dresses without sleeves, shorts, and bathing suits would be curtailed as well. Not only would pork be banned; only kosher food would be acceptable. And, of course, only a handful of special cases would be permitted abortions.

The huge gulf between what the Haredim want and what they hope to get suggests that they are not as powerful as is generally believed. The truly powerful are not satisfied with symbolic acts. Also, the Haredi track record at winning even symbolic concessions is far from perfect. Years of intensive lobbying have failed to pass the notorious "Who-Is-a-Jew" bill, legislation that—for all its inflammatory political fallout here and abroad—would have the net practical effect of each year forcing a half-dozen or so immigrants converted by non-Orthodox rabbis to undergo Orthodox conversion when they arrive in Israel. An infuriating suggestion, perhaps, but hardly earthshaking. The fact that after decades of lobbying the bill has not passed belies the myth of Haredi political power.

The Protocols of the Elders of Belz

Many here are convinced that the Haredim plan to use their political strength to reshape the country in their own image. Though they are slyly and cynically realpolitik, even when the Haredim talk compromise they keep their eyes on the ultimate prize: total domination of a halachic Israel by a junta of rabbis. The image of the Haredi state hovers vaguely like a nightmare in the secular Israeli imagination. In it, the six hundred-thirteen mitzvot are compulsory, backed by the force of law. Don't drink milk too soon after eating meat, or else risk jail. Do take the trouble to learn Yiddish, because your children will come home from public schools speaking it. In this fantasy of religious dystopia, the secular are strictly second class, manning the army and filling other jobs beneath the dignity of the rabbis and yeshiva *buchers*. Children of seculars are taught to despise their parents; filial love will be displaced by spiritual condescension. Women in this imagined world are barely seen and never heard, at least not in public. Public monies are drained into yeshivot, shuls, mikvot, and the like. Beaches, discos, movie theaters, and universities are disfigured beyond recognition. Fun and freedom both are driven underground.

The Haredi strategy for turning this nightmare into reality is said to have three elements. The first is demographic. The size of the average Haredi family significantly exceeds that of secular families. It is often noted that 60 percent of all Haredim are younger than 25, a statistic forecasting a population explosion no less dramatic than that of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The comparison has not gone unnoticed. One political cartoon has a pregnant Harid followed by seven very little boys, happily striding away to their yeshivot. In the background, Rav Peretz remarks to Peres and Shamir: "The demographic problem? We'll take care of that!" The cartoon exploits a painful irony all too immediate to most seculars, who feel squeezed between two burgeoning enemies—the Palestinians on the one hand and the Haredim on the other. In fact, the pinch of Haredi demographics is more immediate than that of the Palestinians. The local Jerusalem newspaper *Kol Ha'ir* several years ago published a map of prospective changes in population distribution in the city over the next decades. Predominantly Haredi areas were rendered in rich black ink. The maps showed Jerusalem growing ever blacker and blacker, until the maps predicting demographics for the second quarter of the 21st century were essentially one large black blotch. But Haredi hegemony is not just a fear for the future; it is already perceived as a clear and present danger. An article entitled "An End to the Zionist State" that ran in *Ha'aretz* last year began:

> In Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ashdod, Netanya, Herzlia Petuach, and other cities, there is a Haredi "invasion" of secular neighborhoods. Unlike the past, when demographic pressures led to the marginal expansion of religious neighborhoods or to the establishment of new religious neighborhoods, there are now signs of a trend of Haredim penetrating the heart of secular neighborhoods, rendering them religious in character. Long-time residents claim that this new trend is no accident.

The second element of the imputed plan for Haredi domination is proselytizing. Haredim maintain high profiles in airports and bus and train stations as well as in the commercial districts of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, where they load folding snack tables with piles of yarmulkes and tefillin for secular males to don and bless. Chabad Haredim operate a small fleet of Winnebagos—christened "mitzvah tanks"—covered on the outside with traditional quotations and illustrated inspirational charges to light candles on the Sabbath, to pray, etc., and equipped with mounted speakers—shtetl blasters—that blare klezmer music. Even though they are technically forbidden there, Haredim often turn up at army camps on religious holidays handing soldiers food and modest gifts, often preprinted cards with a blessing on one side and a picture of a great rabbi on the other. Representatives of "Ba'al Tshuva Yeshivot," schools catering to seculars seeking religion, tempt tourists and locals in public

squares and stations of Israel's large cities with offers of free weekend "experiences" with religious families, or free, open-ended stays in yeshivot. Signs hung in the Hebrew University student center ask, "How can you understand the Jewish state until you have understood Judaism?" and offer instruction, without obligation, at a local yeshiva. The Haredi presence—ever inviting seculars to perform the odd mitzvah, to learn the odd *sugya* of Talmud, or to offer the odd blessing—is ubiquitous. Recently, after filling up on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, I was handed a magnetic *Tfillat HaDerech* (Traveller's Prayer) for my dashboard along with my change. Standing near the pumps was a smiling Haredi.



The new demographic problem? Secular Israelis see the Haredim as an invading horde.

There are no accurate statistics about how many secular Israelis have become Haredim, but many—particularly parents—are concerned that the number is large and growing. More importantly, there is a feeling that no one is safe, that no matter how rationally children are raised, they may ultimately be lured into the Haredi camp. Uri Zohar, an immensely popular comedian in the 1960s, gave up acting years ago to become Haredi and people still talk about it in hushed tones, like a family tragedy: "He had everything, *everything,* and still it happened to him."

The final element of the imputed Haredi plan is political—opportunistically wringing outrageous concessions from the deadlocked Knesset while wresting greater control over its purse strings. In 1947, David Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, sent a letter to Rav Levin, leader of the Haredi Agudath Israel party, outlining the incipient Jewish state's stand on religious issues. The letter—which formalized a *modus vivendi* that had evolved since 1935—allowed for Haredi control over marriage, divorce, and the like, and for an independent Haredi school system. The letter also guaranteed kosher food in public institutions and a modicum of public Sabbath observance; its *quid pro quo* was an Agudath promise not to protest the establishment of the Jewish state to a UN committee deliberating about the future of Palestine. In March 1948, the Haganah Chief of Staff announced that the military service of four hundred yeshiva *buchers* would be postponed. Ben-Gurion explained that "Agudath functionaries approached me, [saying that] there are four hundred yeshiva *buchers* of army age, and that if they are all conscripted, their yeshivot will have to be closed." The terms detailed in the letter, along with the army exemptions, were eight years later canonized as the "status quo" for Israeli religious affairs, a political baseline unacceptable to the seculars and Haredim alike, but one with which both groups were willing to live, however much they might grit their teeth.

But the status quo, many seculars argue, is nothing more than a political frontier that the Haredim are forever contesting. No sooner were the first "status quo" commitments fulfilled than the Haredim, insatiable, demanded more. In the last decade and a half alone, the Haredim demanded that El Al stop flying on Shabbat; that all of Israel's crops in the Sabbatical year be sold abroad; and that in the same year, Israel's domestic food needs be met by import (following the mandate for Jews to refrain from enjoying their own produce every seventh year). They demanded that strict criteria be established to limit when and where autopsies can be performed; they demanded that religious females be automatically waived from army service and national service; they demanded that the number of yeshiva *buchers* exempted from army service be multiplied many times. Since 1977 the number has grown from eight hundred to over twenty thousand. In fact, all of the demands catalogued above were met, often at great cost. And most seculars found to their alarm that each of these political concessions was immediately annexed into the "status quo," which—a misnomer—is anything but static. Indeed, many seculars fear that the status quo will only stop expanding when Israel becomes a Torah state.

Testimony to this talent for Machtpolitik is the Haredim's showing during the past two attempts to form coalition governments. In both instances, after the

elections of 1988 and during the crisis following the toppling of the National Unity government in early 1990, the Haredi parties extracted (although "extorted" is the word usually used) far-reaching concessions from each of the major parties. In the 1988 negotiations, the Haredi parties floated demands for their members to occupy the Ministries of Absorption, Interior, Religion, Housing, and Welfare, as well as major Knesset chairmanships. They also called for a new package of religious legislation, as well as a pile of cash—no one knows quite how much—for Haredi institutions. Each of the major parties was initially willing to meet these demands. Ultimately, however, they frustrated the Haredim by joining with each other in a National Unity government, a realignment that significantly reduced the concessions that the major parties were willing to make. But less than two years later, the Haredim were wiser, and their savvy paid off. After the government was toppled by a vote of no-confidence, both Peres and Shamir—in a show of political desperation unequaled in the annals of coalitional horse-trading—obsequiously conceded to old and new Haredi demands alike. After a ringing public denouncement of the Labor party by Rav Shach, the octogenerian spiritual leader of two Haredi parties, most of the Haredi faction lined up with Shamir and the Likud. The Haredi parties could boast control over major ministries and committees and could promise their constituencies that they would secure the approval of the four religious laws recently proposed in Knesset. They could also proudly declare to their voters that the special funds allocated by the Knesset for Haredi educational institutions had grown over 2,000 percent in just a few years, from less than 14 million shekels in 1988, to over 300 million in 1990.

But what goes over like gangbusters with voters in Bnei Brak does not go over well in Tel Aviv. Seculars were aghast by what they saw as mafia-style extortionism on the part of the Haredim and spineless pandering by the government. Noam Spenzer described the scene in an article entitled "The Secular Option":

> We are witness, first hand and in real-time, to the cynical Haredi trampling of the secular political system. [We are witness] to their lust for power, their uncontrolled impulses, their fanaticism, their hostility, their trivial quarrel-mongering, their greed, their feverish penchant for extorting money from the secular system. The Haredi establishment today is a sophisticated and opportunistic political mechanism that is concerned only with advancing Haredi interests. The rest of Israel is of no concern to it. To their credit, the Haredim do not hide their intentions. Their desire to protect their way of life, and to impose it on Israel's secular residents, is expressed openly and with passion.

Shulamith Aloni, leader of RATZ, adopted the beleaguered but hortatory tone of a televangelist to describe the Haredim to a gathering of students at Tel Aviv University. "Now they want to be in your kitchens," she said, invoking the law that prohibits raising pigs. "Soon, they will want to be everywhere, on your streets, on your beaches, in your schools, and in your bedrooms." Recently, dozens of secular students showed up at universities ostentatiously wearing yarmulkes in protest of Haredi political hegemony: "It won't be long until they force us to wear them anyway," one of them said. "Why not get a head start?" A cartoon run in *Ha'aretz* depicts Shamir as a marionette in a clown suit, being manipulated from above by Haredi Knesset members, whose own strings are pulled in turn by *Moetzet Gdolei Hatorah* (the Council of Torah Sages), a body of aged Haredi luminaries who wield great influence over the activities of Haredi political factions. Such examples of popular resentment of the Haredim are commonplace and one never need look far to find them. This is because many seculars are convinced that the Haredim are well on their way to achieving their final goal: domination of the Israeli legislature and treasury.

Like most conspiracy theories, the plausibility of this one rests on selective attention to facts. For all the relocation of Haredim into formerly secular neighborhoods, their share of the population—and of the vote—has not increased appreciably in the 43 years since the state was established. In fact, in the last election the Haredim garnered roughly the same proportion of votes as they received in 1949. After the 1949 election, the National Religious Party was founded, and the constituency of the Haredi Agudath Israel Party thinned significantly. Thus, the fact that the sum of all the Haredi parties is now more or less commensurate with the Agudath in 1949 does represent decades of slow Haredi electoral gain. The fact remains, however, that Haredi rabbis control no more votes in the Knesset than they did forty years ago.

Though the Haredim may be less powerful and less malevolent than they are generally perceived to be, they are certainly more powerful than they should be and they seem to have little regard for secular sensibilities when they exercise their power. My point is simply that the facts about Haredi power underdetermine secular fear of the Haredim. The secular perception of the Haredim is infused with *surplus* disdain, fear, and hatred. It is this surplus that transforms the Haredim from just another interest group playing political hardball (and winning) into the debauched, threatening mafiosi they are often perceived to be. And for all the energy that Haredim

devote to proselytizing, they don't seem to be meeting with much success. Certainly the number of secular Jews in Israel who become Haredim is far smaller than the number of secular Jews in the United States who join religious cults. The sociologist of religion Moti Bar-Lev reports that one in five religious Israelis eventually becomes secular; there may be greater drift away from the Haredi world than toward it. Finally, if the structure of Israeli government is changed via electoral reform—a proposition that more than 80 percent of the electorate now supports—the political gains and tactical power of the Haredim will vanish immediately, and possibly forever.

These facts, though widely known, do little to assuage the fears of most seculars that Israel is on the verge of becoming a Torah state. It could be said rightly that secular Israelis' fears are founded by their furies, and that they have every reason to be furious.

The Debauched Haredi

It is not rare for Haredim to be depicted as leering lechers and rapists. In fact, despite a professed Haredi monopoly on moral and spiritual virtue, most seculars believe that beneath the Haredi's black frock throbs unchecked libido. When the film *Working Girls*—a pseudo-documentary following a day in the life of a high-class New York parlor prostitute—was screened on Israeli television some weeks ago, secular viewers responded with a perverse sort of relish to a scene depicting Haredi clientele. The scene was made yet more delicious by the prostitute's annoyed observation that Haredim shower too infrequently. On a city bus, I overheard an argument over whether Haredim comprise the majority of johns in absolute terms, or only in proportional terms. That they were very good customers was not questioned.

Among the best-selling Israeli novels of the past years—my copy comes from the eighteenth printing—is *Apicores Be'al Korcho (A Heretic Despite Himself)* by Yehoshua Bar-Yosef. The jacket notes make much of Bar-Yosef's background as a child of a well-known Haredi family—uniquely qualifying him to accurately portray the emotional and ideological world of the Haredim. The notes tell us further that most of Bar-Yosef's books emphasize the "sensual-erotic undertones" and expose the Haredi lusts and illicit impulses. *Apicores* tells the story of two generations of Jerusalem Haredim, focusing on two particularly promising scholars. Each beds down a number of women—secular and Haredi alike—and, even when planning and executing extramarital affairs, feels little remorse or guilt. The book glides by an incestuous interlude, and slithers into scenes of low-class prostitution. It reads like Jackie Collins in a *Shtreimel* and *Kittel*. And all this written by an insider. "It's got to be accurate," opined one lecturer at Tel Aviv University. "After all, it's 95 percent autobiographical."

Nowhere are Haredi Jews as feared and hated as in Israel. Israel is a bastion of a classic sort of anti-Semitism, aimed not against all Jews, but against the ultra-Orthodox, the overly Jewy *Jews.*

But one need not rely on fiction for tales of debauchery among the Haredim; one can find sufficiently lurid stories in the morning paper. Late last year, Rav Pardes—a leading judge in the Tel Aviv religious courts—was accused of pressuring women who sued for divorce in his court to have sex with him. The details were sordid. On many occasions—no one is really sure how many because not all of the victims were willing to talk—Pardes ordered women to meet him in his office, where he asked what one woman described as "very intimate questions." He also suggested—so the reports have it—that the women were likely to fare well in court only if they had sex with him. One of his victims surreptitiously taped his advances, and, turning the tables, blackmailed the rabbi for thousands of dollars. Eventually, word of Pardes's harassment reached the police and then the press. In a courtroom filled with journalists, antagonists, and well-wishers—including the rebbitzen who gallantly rallied to her husband's side—Pardes pled guilty to several counts and, after a high court overturned a plea-bargain agreement to do community service, was sentenced to six months of hard time. When an investigative reporter for the Tel Aviv weekly *Ha'ir* turned up at Pardes's shul after his sentencing, she found his congregation unabashed and unrepentant. While some refused to believe the rabbi's own admissions, most acted as though the entire affair was no big deal, concluding that their rabbi had been seduced by the wiles of loose-moraled, secular tramps. This did not surprise them, nor did it warrant vigorous condemnation. Meanwhile, many seculars were not surprised either, though for different reasons. "This kind of thing goes on all the time in the Haredi community," was a common view. "They're just usually slippery enough to get away with it."

While the Pardes affair was lurid enough to demand sustained national attention, it has since been eclipsed by what may be much larger Haredi corruption in a

much higher place. Some months ago, Israel's largest circulation tabloid, *Yediot Achronot,* received tips that Arye Dehri, the Haredi Interior Minister, may have been skimming government funds for himself, his family, and his party. Anonymous sources have leaked to the press that months of police investigation turned up significant "irregularities" in the handling of funds. Real estate purchased for schools—so it has been reported—seems to have found its way to the Dehri family. Monies have been misappropriated, and large sums are not accounted for. The police files have been turned over to the judiciary to determine if there is cause for legal action. But although he has not yet been formally accused, in the minds of many, Dehri—who continues to serve as Interior Minister—is undoubtedly guilty. "That's what happens," one observer commented, "when you give a Harid the combination to the safe."

It is not only the few corrupt Haredi politicians who lack character; in the secular view moral weakness is a corporate Haredi trait. Emblematic of their moral weakness is the behavior of Haredi rabbis in Europe during the Holocaust, behavior documented in a book by Mendel Paikage about the Hasidim of Poland. The book—*Polish Hasidism: Intellectual Trends Between the Two Wars and from 1940–1945*—though a rather technical history, received significant attention in the secular press. The leaders of all the major Haredi factions, so the book argues, counseled their congregants that they were living in messianic times and that, hence, there was no reason to leave. Some went further and damned those who, out of fear, were willing to follow the Zionists to Palestine. What is most disturbing about this story, however, is that even as the rabbis were counseling their congregations to remain, they themselves were planning their own getaway. The rabbis of Lubavitsch, Gur, and Satmar all survived, while most of their adherents died taking their advice. Likewise, the great Litvak rabbis, including the Rav Shach, saved themselves, sometimes abandoning their own wives and children to the Nazis. For secular Israelis—raised on the *Acharai* military ethos that demands that commanders must always stand at the front of their troops in battle—the stories of selfish rabbinic escapes represent a nauseating cowardice.

This cowardice re-emerged at the start of the Gulf War, when—it was widely reported—large numbers of Haredim fled the country, frightened by Saddam's threats. On the day the war began, Nachum Barnaya declared in an op-ed in *Yediot* that "in the past days thousands of Haredi yeshiva *buchers* have left the country.... Without shame they stormed airline ticket-sellers, wads of cash in their hands, asking to leave the country at any price." He went on to say that the *buchers* themselves are not to blame; they don't think for themselves anyway. Instead, Haredi leaders—none of whom even encouraged their flock to stay—should bear the blame. Haredi leaders were reluctant to counsel *buchers* to remain, Barnaya suggested, largely out of a sense of guilt over the failure of Haredi leadership during the Holocaust. But even if this explanation is true, it means that the Haredi leaders have done little more than substitute one brand of cowardice for another. In fact, this face-saving reversal is yet another sign of moral deformity, further proof that Haredim don't know the meaning of the words courage and commitment. Barnaya argued that this deformity was further dramatized in the yeshivot campaigns to solicit continued room-and-board monies from the government even as resident *buchers* were fleeing the country in droves. Not content merely to leave the secular to be gassed to death, the Haredim had to bleed them for bucks as well.

The secular Israeli image of the Haredi—powerful, untrustworthy, clannish, debauched, a seducer of the young and innocent, money-crazed, unrepentantly selfish, a free-rider, cowardly, lacking strong moral fiber, poised to dominate the unsuspecting and kind-hearted majority—has a familiar ring. In fact, the image of the Israeli Haredi bears a striking family resemblance to some European anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew that gained currency over the last two centuries.

That many Enlightenment intellectuals—and, no less, several generations of European literati that followed—disliked Jews, feared them, and distrusted them is among the most often repeated clichés of Jewish historiography. Authorities disagree about where to squeeze this "enlightened" anti-Semitism (or anti-Semitism of the enlightened) into a typology of Jew-hatred. Because post-Enlightenment intellectuals were by and large enchanted by reason and ostensibly imbued with it, their brand of anti-Semitism rarely rested explicitly on the basis of rank fabrication or fantasy (Jews killing for blood, raping young women, and the like). And because their own ties to the Church were often attenuated, their dislike of Jews rarely had a dogmatic foundation (Jews deny Christ, or worse, Jews killed Christ). The new enlightened Jew-hatred was—in keeping with its Enlightenment lineage—much more a "science" of anti-Semitism than the more visceral varieties that preceded it. It rested—so the literati seem to have believed—on disinterested observation of the Jew.

Voltaire, perhaps the archetype of the enlightened Jew-hater, conceded that "we ought not to burn them."

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Roundtable: Doubting Thomas

When George Bush nominated Clarence Thomas to replace Thurgood Marshall on the Supreme Court, most liberals reacted with a mixture of outrage, despair, and feelings of helplessness. Bush seemed to have played his ultimate trump card, selecting a Black grandson of a sharecropper whom liberals normally would want to support—but who holds neoconservative views that appear to reject everything they fought for over the last thirty years. But instead of seeing the problem with Thomas as merely his opposition to the liberal perspective on issues such as affirmative action, we at Tikkun *think the deeper questions raised by the nomination relate to the ideological and emotional contradictions built into the liberal perspective itself.*

TIKKUN: How should progressives react to the Thomas nomination?

Harold Cruse: I think he should be confirmed, although I personally neither support nor oppose him. I'm separating his ideology from his individual fitness to sit on the Supreme Court; given his background, training, and accomplishments, and the fact that Bush nominated him, he should be confirmed. It would be presumptuous of me to argue about the man's qualifications, since I'm not a legal expert.

Peter Gabel: I don't think you can separate the question of Thomas's ideology from the question of his fitness as a judge. There is a deep image many people have—one that you seem to be expressing, Harold—that law is qualitatively different from politics, that there is a neutral craft to judicial decision-making, and that the only question we should ask is whether Clarence Thomas performs this craft well enough to sit on the Supreme Court.

But there are at least two problems with this law-as-neutral-craft approach. One is that legal concepts such as equal protection are so open-ended that they always have to be interpreted. Whoever does the interpreting is obviously going to be influenced by what result they think is right, by their background, their past political views, and so on. And there are always legal arguments and precedents to support virtually any result—so if you're against affirmative action, it's not difficult, once you learn the "craft," to find authoritative reasons why it's unconstitutional.

The second problem is that the law itself is full of political values. With their black robes and their privileged, somewhat mystified language, judges use their cultural authority to shape the way people think about individual freedom, social responsibility, race relations, gender roles, the environment—everything that really matters. It's a myth to think that judges are just professional experts applying laws that are somehow external to them—they're constantly creating and recreating images of who people are, what we want, and what constitutes a just society. And you don't have to be a lawyer to have an opinion about that. To me, the legal arena—including the Senate confirmation hearings—should be seen as an important public context to struggle over what is a good social vision, and what isn't, instead of thinking we have to defer to legal experts whose craft and so-called legal minds obscure—not only for the public but even for themselves—the social vision they're promulgating.

The Thomas nomination should be understood as part of a conservative attempt to institutionalize a particular vision of what American society should be like—especially with respect to race—and therefore his ideology should be the central focus. So I would like to ask Harold what he makes of Thomas's ideology.

Cruse: Thomas represents a long-standing strand of thinking in the Black community. He is nothing new in terms of an ideologue. Ever since 1900 there has been a tug-of-war in the Black community over how Black progress should be conceived, a conflict between integrationists, who saw race progress in terms of assimilation into the white society and basically

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accepted the assumptions of white culture, and nationalists, who pushed self-determination and self-sufficiency. But I still think that I am going to neither support nor oppose Thomas.

Catharine MacKinnon: I personally find a lot to be both concerned about and hopeful about in Judge Thomas. Therefore, I find myself not opposing his nomination at this time, and I'll say why, although I'm open to hearing differently and learning more. First, I'm troubled by his seeming lack of any community-based identification. He presents his life as a story of individual achievement, of the go-it-alone and bootstrap mythology of individualism. This mythology denies community, including all the African Americans who fought, sweated, and died for the social reforms that he has benefited from. His apparent denial of a collective community legitimates the myth of progress one individual at a time. The "individual" in this sense of merit and will is really a code for "white male." There are an awful lot of people in oppressed communities who don't get anywhere, regardless of how brilliant they are, how hard they work, how much they aspire and put into trying to improve their life situation, simply because they are not white men.

On the other hand, I'm partly hopeful about Judge Thomas because I sense that he is connected with reality, that he approaches issues from an actual experiential base rather than the kind of abstracted-from-life categories of legal analysis that Peter referred to. When he talks, he seems to start off with life experiences. I'm not saying he gets it right analytically, but as a matter of method he starts with life and works to analysis. It's clear that the liberal rhetoric that's been passed off as progressivism doesn't work for him, and it doesn't work for me either. Take affirmative action. Liberals never challenged the fundamental racism of the standards in contrast to which affirmative action was the remedy. They keep discriminating, then use affirmative action to cover it up so they can feel good about themselves, discriminate again, and then have to fix it again. They never figure out how simply not to discriminate. That's the context a Clarence Thomas is reacting against. I don't think liberal/conservative is the most salient political cleavage in the issues I deal with. You have to understand why people are conservatives, what in conservativism speaks to their lives. Liberals don't speak to the reality of people like Judge Thomas. It's a similar dynamic with conservative women I've met. Conservatives talk about the real injury that, say, pornography causes; liberalism trivializes that injury and defends it as the "free speech" of pornographers. It makes more sense in terms of women's life experiences to hear someone talk a right-wing "law-and-order" line that at least acknowledges the reality of sexual violence against women.

What I'm saying is that I'm not at all alarmed, as someone who, among other things, practices law, about the prospect of litigating before Judge Thomas. I feel that I can talk to this man. My test is: Will reality get in? I do not agree with his political analysis, but I think if a better political analysis were advanced—one closer to, not further away from, actual reality than the one he has been given—he would give it a fair hearing. I would like to see what comes up at the hearings. I'm really opposed to the way that some women's groups have been first off the starting block to condemn Thomas, based on scanty evidence about his views on abortion. They should investigate more, instead of opposing him immediately.

TIKKUN: Should it make a difference to us that Thomas is Black, or should we approach his nomination as we would that of any other neoconservative Bush might have nominated?

Kimberlé Crenshaw: I unequivocally oppose the appointment. Thomas is not just another neoconservative, like Bork. The fact that he is Black unmistakably transforms the cultural meaning of his nomination. That Bush can, on the one hand, denounce affirmative action, repudiate race consciousness, and oppose the civil-rights bill—and in fact use racial fears to rally white conservatives around the images of Willie Horton—then turn around and obviously utilize race as the central criterion in his selection of Thomas demonstrates the free rein that right-wing forces currently enjoy. This is confirmed in the feeling of many liberals that their hands have been tied by the assumption that his Blackness and his life story of poverty, discrimination, and achievement somehow should put them in a fundamentally different position vis-à-vis his appointment.

If Thomas were white, the whole debate would already be different. Opposition would have already sharpened and intensified, based on his neoconservative views, just as it did with Bork. Instead, there has been an inability to talk about what Thomas really represents. And within the Black community in particular, the fact that Thomas is Black has led to ambivalence because, despite the fact that African Americans have multiple identities—as workers, as intellectuals, as women—most of us see race as primary, with good historical reason. So there is a certain pride when an African American succeeds. The Colin Powell phenomenon reflects this. Many Blacks who opposed the war—and who might oppose everything the military stands for—were nonetheless affected by the way he handled the press and appeared in the media. Given the small number of Blacks in authority positions, Powell's presence was a

mark of inclusion, regardless of the context. And it's the same with Thomas. Despite the disparaging remarks he's made about civil-rights groups, his gutting of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or the implications of his up-by-the-bootstraps mentality for masses of Blacks who don't even have boots, it's as if a member of the family has made it, and it would be too impolite to look critically at how he has managed to make it. This mind-set blinds many to the way family ties are being exploited for personal gain and to the detriment of the community.

Part of the cultural dynamics underlying the Thomas nomination is that the Left has not sufficiently challenged the individualist mythology that Thomas is clearly supposed to embody. We need to present a vision of racial justice that challenges the deep assumptions of affirmative action as it has been presented in law and in mainstream political rhetoric. And we need to have a difficult conversation within the Black community about how to respond to people like Thomas, who use their family ties to discredit us.

Cornel West: I agree with what Kim has just said, but I think we need to think of how to express our opposition to Thomas in effective ways. Even if qualifications are partly political, we have to highlight the degree to which Thomas is unqualified. The nomination is an example of cynical tokenism. Bush chose Thomas simply because he is the grandson of a Black sharecropper. Look at his undistinguished record as a student, his eight years at the EEOC where he left thirteen-thousand age-discrimination cases dying on the vine for lack of investigation, and his undistinguished performance during a mere fifteen months as a judge.

Also, Thomas was chosen because he is an unadulterated, vulgar right-wing ideologue. Here's a man who said that Oliver North was the victim of persecution. I therefore disagree with Catharine when she says that Thomas is closer to reality than liberals. His only claim to authenticity is that he is the grandson of a sharecropper—and that gets liberals all tied up because they are ignorant of the complicated history of Black thinking about race that Harold was referring to. Yes, Thomas represents a historical strand of African-American culture, but it's a deeply reactionary—I would even say authoritarian—strand. These currents of Black culture are becoming even stronger lately, especially around issues of gender and sexual orientation. The Reagan-Bush right wing is trying to embrace this strand in Black America as a cover to conceal what is actually happening to working people, to people of color, to women, to the elderly, and to the poor in this age of inhumane retrenchment of any commitment to equalize opportunity or provide for the most vulnerable in American society.

TIKKUN: The failures of the liberal approach to race have been mentioned by several of you. What do you mean by this? How has the movement for affirmative action been inadequate?

Gary Peller: Before responding, I want to say first that there was a heroic dimension to the civil-rights movement and to the attempts of Earl Warren, Thurgood Marshall, and others to articulate a morally and legally compelling basis for fighting racism. But the civil-rights discourse of the sixties also had a built-in conservatism that has become more and more apparent over the years, especially as it has been institutionalized in law. Racism was described by early civil-rights advocates as being "biased" or prejudiced against someone based on an irrational attribute like skin color. Hence Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream of the day that a person "would be judged by the content of his character rather than the color of his skin." The underlying ideal was that people should be color-blind, that they should ignore race and other arbitrary attributes of people. Once we do that, we will have achieved social justice because everyone will be treated equally and on their individual merits *regardless of race*. This idea was soon translated into the constitutional definition of illegal racial domination as the intentional discrimination against someone based on their race.

Maybe King and others actually believed that racial equality would be achieved once decision makers stopped intentionally discriminating, but even after intentional discrimination was banned, people of color were still disproportionately excluded from jobs and educational opportunities. Liberals then started claiming underenforcement of civil rights because it was hard to prove intentional bias, or that Blacks were "culturally deprived" and needed a leg up. But the underlying model of ultimately transcending racism by making institutions neutral to race stayed the same. So the basic picture has been that being conscious of race is bad, that it is the mark of ignorance and prejudice, and that it should be replaced by objective and rational decision-making. From this kind of ideological starting point, affirmative action is inherently problematic, precisely because it requires taking race into account. Consequently, the dominant rhetoric on affirmative action is negative and defensive, treating race consciousness as an unfortunate and temporary tool to get institutions integrated, and to be discarded as soon as racial bias is eradicated and neutral decision making reigns. The problem is that, by treating affirmative-action decisions as "exceptional," liberal

race discourse has helped legitimate the whole range of "regular" non–affirmative action decision-making as neutral, objective, and meritocratic. The rhetoric of affirmative action implies that those who have received jobs or educational opportunities without affirmative action have earned them through their own merit; and conversely, it implies that others have failed because of personal inadequacy.

And color blindness shouldn't be the goal anyway. Because race is not arbitrary in the sense that people "just happen to be" Black or white. There are real cultural communities that racial identity partially reflects, and that the image of transcending race consciousness denies.

Gabel: I want to add to what Kim and Gary just said by talking about the underlying psychological dynamics that are implicated in conventional race rhetoric, and that help explain Thomas both as an individual and also as a cultural figure that many people identify with. It may seem paradoxical that Clarence Thomas embraces the color-blindness model of equal opportunity in his opposition to affirmative action, while he simultaneously expresses admiration for Black nationalists like Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. At a philosophical level, the Black nationalist position is the very opposite of the kind of rights-based legalism that Thomas embraces, as Harold's scholarship and Gary's recent article in *Tikkun* ["Race Against Integration," January/February 1991] demonstrate. But if we understand the complicated psychological bases of someone like Thomas, we can see how the apparent cognitive contradiction of his positions is related to a deeper emotional ground.

Affirmative action was always based on the contradiction that Kim and Gary talked about. The notion of a special exception to "neutral" standards for distributing jobs, say, actually legitimized *white* standards of merit and human worth as the norm. It implicitly treated minorities as victims of oppression who needed a handout to get up to the starting point that white people were already at—and then would have equal opportunity to compete. The problem is that the terms of the competition themselves were created by whites, reflected *white* values, and specifically embody the ideology through which the elite whites justify their position. But that cultural reality has never been on the table in American legal or political debate.

So that, despite whatever genuine aspirations initially motivated affirmative action discourse, it now has a partly negative meaning that Thomas's opposition to affirmative action evokes in American culture. People like Thomas have a need for real recognition and confirmation of their worth and value. The comprehension of affirmative action as a handout produces a sense of rage because affirmative action in that guise fails to respond to the actual emotional degradation that racism engenders in its victims. Thomas's life story is evocative because it makes clear that he has experienced oppression as a Black person, and therefore the assumption is that he must be empathetic to other victims of social domination. I recently read in the *Washington Post* a story about how Thomas had asked a white reporter after they had dinner together in Georgetown to hail a cab for him because cabs in Georgetown won't stop for a Black man. It's hard to read accounts like this without having the sense that, unlike many white opponents of affirmative action, it's not that Thomas is oblivious to racism. It's exactly the opposite. The emotional humiliation of racism is at the forefront of his psychological reality. But the reigning handout imagery of affirmative action can't respond to this emotional dynamic. It's actually part of its source. I think that this is why Clarence Thomas is hostile to affirmative action—and why it's so important for him to insist on his ability to "make it" on his own without "help" from whites. Thomas' simultaneous embrace of the isolationist self-help rhetoric of Muslims and the individualism of neoconservatives is not contradictory at the psychological level because *both* operate as a sort of psychological defense mechanism against the pain and humiliation of racism. The feeling of powerlessness is compensated for by identifying with the Farrakhan imagery of a powerful group that doesn't need white help because it is self-sufficient and strong; in a similar way, the opposition to affirmative action responds to the feeling of powerlessness by posing power in terms of self-sufficient individual success, the idea of toughing it out, lifting yourself by the bootstraps, as Catharine and Kim were saying. Thomas—like many others—deals with this underlying humiliation and rage that has no acceptable form of cultural expression by embracing a kind of utopian libertarianism—an angry insistence that "we can make it on our own and don't need anyone's help." It's a fantasy, but it has a lot of mass psychological power—the same kind of power that the Bush campaign summoned through the construction of a fantasy community based on the flag, patriotism, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the threat of Willie Horton.

Crenshaw: When we criticize the ways liberals have constructed the moral and legal basis of affirmative action, it's important to distinguish our critique of affirmative action from the right-wing rhetoric. I want to make it clear that I am for affirmative action. I think it needs to be transformed in order to confirm and empower people rather than to encourage feelings of personal and group inadequacy, but the point is not to oppose

affirmative action itself.

When the right wing criticizes affirmative action, it criticizes the entire practice of being race conscious; the neoconservative position is that race is no longer a valid category of analysis, that we shouldn't be talking about racial disparities or racial differences whatsoever. At least liberals realize that race still matters in what goes on in everyday American life. And that's an aspect of the discourse of affirmative action that we can't just give up. Because the real problem, as Gary suggested, is that we as a society have not ever seriously confronted the question of cultural particularity, or the ways that dominant measures of merit and worth fail to account for difference and fail to value and confirm the various cultural identities that situate us in particular cultures—and that also give us our human character.

While I agree with Catharine and Peter that Thomas is partly reacting to the myth of meritocracy underlying liberal rhetoric, we're not saying, as the right wing does, that the "stigma" of affirmative action programs produces Clarence Thomases because affirmative action violates a natural desire to be seen without racial identity, solely as an individual. The stigma that conservatives attribute to affirmative action simply comes from being Black in America—it antedated affirmative action and it will survive it. And the vast majority of African Americans who live with the same pressures don't take the Thomas approach. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans have a similar claim to pulling themselves up by the bootstraps—if that means working hard, maintaining confidence in the face of expectations of inferiority, and taking advantage of opportunities, including affirmative action. These folks have had to cope with the contradictions of success in a social frame in which many relatives and friends haven't been as fortunate.

The problem is not that affirmative action has demeaned our achievements; it is the awareness of all the others who admire our achievements and could have accomplished the same things if opportunities had been distributed fairly. Of course there's a struggle with anger when we're told our very presence is an "exception" to ordinary criteria. But most have negotiated this tension without asserting the inferiority of the rest of the family and without pushing others down the ladder that we climbed up. Neoconservative Blacks like Thomas deal with the tension by trying to disassociate from the group, because for them the specter of inferiority is directly tied to being Black—and to the fear that the only thing preventing their climb to true meritocratic acceptance is the hordes of other Blacks holding on to their ankles.

So we need to challenge the individualist story that conservatives are pushing. Take the mythology that is being created about Clarence Thomas rising from poverty, by virtue of his individual intelligence and perseverance, even in the face of obstacles such as racism. Then there is the image of his sister that he has created—that she, in contrast to his self-reliance, is on welfare, and that she complains when her welfare check is late, arrogantly acting as if she is entitled. This whole story is meant to capitalize on existing beliefs about the poor, about Blacks, and about women—all of which come together in the image of the Black welfare queen whose plight is solely rooted in her dependence on the state. But the real story of the difference between Thomas and his sister is a story of gender and class. Namely, he was sent to school to be educated. She wasn't. She took care of people. He didn't. She probably took care of him, too. That's the pretty traditional story that gets completely suppressed in the dominant rhetoric about welfare, race, and dependency. My sense of Clarence Thomas is that he doesn't represent the much-heralded phenomenon of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps. The story instead is how he climbed over the body of his sister—and metaphorically the bodies of the very Black women he insults with his willingness to demean us for his own political gain. So, as a Black woman, I just don't see the lack of information about Thomas's "gender positions." Thomas reflects a very specific ideology about Black women—an ideology of put-down that is a growing phenomenon within the Black community.

West: Kim's last point highlights another part of the symbolism of Thomas. A promotion of the degradation of women, of gays and lesbians is emerging—in Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* and John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood,* in rap culture—in a bid for power within the community. The quest for order might be rooted in the disorder of so much of the community, but it's a quest for patriarchal and homophobic order. As the politics of the Black community escalate, the struggle against this cultural conservatism becomes central to any possibility of large-scale redistributive politics.

Crenshaw: Shaharazad Ali's *Blackman's Guide to the Blackwoman* is a perfect example. She says Black men have to reestablish their authority over Black women—by force if necessary. The negative image of the Black welfare queen that Thomas and other neoconservatives market resonates with traditionalists in the community who offer up the same misogynist analysis. This gender issue is not just an aside; it is a crucial missing link between the struggle against racism and feminist movements. Because the civil-rights community is not attuned to gender dynamics within the Black community, civil-rights activists tend not to see Thomas's evocation of his sister as a race issue. They don't comprehend the

particular way that gender hierarchy—the image that the community needs "strong men, loyal, subservient women"—is a race issue, because what's at stake is the kind of social structure the Black community should have. And feminists fail to see the same assault as an issue of female oppression. They only see it as a remark about welfare policy. But if a white Supreme Court nominee talked about his sister like Thomas did, feminists would immediately see the gender dimension. Because it comes wrapped up in a cultural symbol that crosses multiple categories, activists in both camps fail to recognize that the evidence they seek about Thomas is right in front of them. Feminists should not get caught up worrying about what his position on abortion is—as if that's the only gender issue here. Take a look at how he talks about his sister.

TIKKUN: When we were talking specifically about affirmative action earlier, several of you said that the dominant standards of selection in American society were not really meritocratic. What kind of criterion for jobs or admission to schools would be more objective?

Crenshaw: There is no way not to be culturally "biased" in a sense, because any selection criterion we choose will necessarily express some culturally situated idea of what kind of world we want to live in—of what kind of school or work life we want to have. The idea is not to be neutral to culture, but to understand critically the cultural character of existing practices. Neither the testing practices nor the power relations they reproduce are immune from criticism and change—and they certainly shouldn't be institutionalized.

Peller: I agree with Kim that the issue is not simply "bias" in testing, but also the underlying practices that tests are trying to evaluate. Take the debate about the disproportionate racial impact of the LSAT test. The attempt to take account of this kind of disparity through affirmative action is what Thomas and other conservatives claim violates norms of individual merit. The LSAT is supposed to be neutral because it simply measures "qualifications," understood as how one will perform in law school. And there *is* a functional correlation between the test and law school performance. The anomaly is that the defense of the LSAT based on its predictive value takes the status-quo practices of law schools as an unquestioned standard. But the current ways that law schools teach law students are in no way intrinsic to law. The current institutional culture was created by whites during racial apartheid, and in many ways embodies implicit attempts to legitimize racial domination—so that the cooled-out, impersonal, and abstract character of classroom discussion in one sense responds to a need to legitimize law as passionless, and thus to justify exclusion based on Blacks' perceived passion and emotivity.

If law school culture were transformed—if, say, cooperation and empathy replaced the competitive, dispassionate, and aloof norms of law schools, different people would succeed and be deemed "qualified," since the idea of qualification only makes sense in relation to some image of what social roles like "law student" or "lawyer" should embody. And that's a point of struggle—in fact, it's going on right now in legal education with the activism of feminist lawyers like Catharine, critical race-theorists like Kim, and the general politicization that critical legal studies has generated. Of course, conservatives defend the status quo of legal education by claiming it is necessary to prepare students to be lawyers "in the real world." But that merely pushes the controversy to another level. Just as legal education can be transformed, so can legal practice—and many lawyers out there are beginning to engage in precisely this kind of cultural challenge every day—women challenging the male assumptions of the courtroom, lawyers of color constructing culturally expressive styles of legal argument, and so on. And that's what challenges to the LSAT ultimately contest, the way that the legal profession is currently constituted as a domain of white culture. In short, there is a circular and self-justifying character to claims about "qualifications." Liberal civil-rights advocates never articulated this because they talked about racial domination solely in terms of exclusion—with the assumption, perhaps framed in response to white fears of change, that everything else about institutions like law schools *would* remain the same. But racial liberation should be directed at transforming the *culture* of racist institutions. And there's no way to transform law schools without cultural "discrimination" because we necessarily have to choose this cultural form or that, over and over again.

TIKKUN: If the old rhetoric of civil rights and affirmative action is impoverished in these ways, how should we conceive of race reform?

Gabel: I think the most promising approach is to reject the liberal model of affirmative action without rejecting affirmative action itself. Instead, we should support a cultural-pluralist approach to affirmative action that draws on what's good in the multiculturalism movement to affirm the integrity of minority cultures and the ways that the dominant culture has been impoverished by its Eurocentric character. American intellectual life has been less than it could be by virtue of having been cut off from the contributions of minority intellectuals; in

fact, this very topic of cross-cultural power is well developed within the African-American tradition that Harold described as the struggle between integrationists and nationalists—but whites in general have no knowledge of this literature and discourse. "Equal protection" in an intercultural society means validating the contributions of other cultures besides the dominant one. This would be a way to make affirmative action a vehicle of social confirmation and validation rather than a vehicle for generating a victim-centered humiliation that treats Blacks as handout recipients and angers whites because they end up thinking they're not getting what they are entitled to. We have to develop an approach to affirmative action that doesn't make people's sense of social identity and worth hostage to the false neutrality of the dominant criteria of merit.

Cruse: Another problem with the liberal dispensation of affirmative action is that it tends to see African Americans solely as victims. The victim model denies the ways that we have exercised some agency and power, albeit under conditions of racial domination. Even during slavery, Blacks found forms of resistance—including the development of a separate culture. It was a complex negotiation, and Blacks actually achieved a partial ability to manipulate the white masters themselves.

West: When we talk about the redistribution of social resources and cultural validation, we need to relate racial intervention in the form of affirmative action to the long tradition of groups gaining access and power *on a group basis*. What's been ignored in the contemporary debate is that affirmative action has a pedigree in America: It includes the ways that city machines helped redistribute resources to immigrants, that the trade-union movement served working people, that old-boy networks distributed resources to elites, that programs like the G.I. Bill distributed resources to veterans.

Gabel: Once we get off the meritocracy ideology that liberalism has been stuck in, and recognize the particular communities of identity that exist in America, we can develop more empowering legal strategies not only on race issues, but in other movements too. So that, rather than seeing the feminist struggle for a comparable-worth policy simply as removing the "bias" of differential pay, the movement can be articulated as a vehicle for validating a feminist perspective on human worth itself—on the ways that the worlds of work and home should be structured and interrelated, for instance. Rather than accepting the status-quo organization of the workplace as some inevitable market necessity, the comparable-worth movement can give voice to the most radical elements in the critique of male rationality, detachment, and competitiveness—the ways of being that the women's movement in part rose up to challenge.

MacKinnon: I think that could be done, but I would warn against simply building on the differences that have been created in women under conditions of male domination and calling those "women's values."

TIKKUN: The description of multiculturalism may sound attractive to the people here, but how does it address the political situation we're in? It seems clear that liberalism has lost any mass appeal it might have had, say, in the sixties, and most Americans identify with the individualist ideology that you all have described.

Gabel: For one thing, I think there is a deep mass desire to contest the meritocratic mythology that's been dominant for so long. The utopian libertarianism symbolized by Thomas, which holds that anyone can make it if they try hard enough, is a fantasy. It offers no real hope of providing minorities or whites with the experience of confirmation, validation, and worthiness that we all long for as social beings. It needs to be challenged by developing a new communitarian vision of human value that opposes the alienation, isolation, and feelings of personal unworthiness generated within our culture. That could be the basis for a broad new politics of inclusion and confirmation.

Peller: If the liberal discourse of affirmative action is humiliating to Blacks, imagine what it says to whites. If liberals explain Blacks not making it in terms of the various forms of racism in their way, then what but sheer inferiority could possibly explain the failure of white working people to succeed? Working whites too are marginalized by the pseudo-objective standardized tests that tell them that their kids are cut out to be plumbers and electricians and clerical workers, but certainly not part of the intellectual class.

Part of the success of the Right comes from a mass reaction to the ways that liberal rhetoric has served not only to patronize Blacks, but to put down working-class whites as well. They have justifiably felt demeaned by liberals. Part of their anger has been directed at Blacks, who are perceived to be the favorites of the white elites. And we now see the strange phenomenon of working-class whites identifying not only with Reagan and Bush, but with Clarence Thomas too; even David Duke came out in support of his nomination. The frame of identification here, I think, is that working-class whites who haven't made it are blaming the liberal white elites and Blacks. By embracing seemingly contradictory

images like "get the government off our backs," "get tough on Willie Horton," and "ban reverse discrimination," working-class whites express the idea that they would be confirmed as worthy and valuable but for the liberal handouts to Blacks and others. And Thomas ironically embodies that message for them, despite the cynical tokenism of his nomination that Cornel and Kim talked about.

TIKKUN: Assuming that a movement could articulate the kind of multiculturalism that's been described, what's to say that this kind of identity politics—with white women, Black women, gays, and lesbians all demanding recognition—won't devolve into reactionary particularism, with each group only willing to see the world through its own cultural frame of reference?

Crenshaw: That's a good question. All this talk about working-class whites, David Duke—it makes me uncomfortable. I'm not ready to sign on to a coalition with those groups because there is a lot of racial baggage—including downright racial violence—that these groups currently carry.

Gabel: We have to get beyond particularism by appealing to the mass desire—a desire that's even held in distorted form by the groups Kim mentions—to be connected with a larger community of human validation. We need to express a new sense of a "we" that has the kind of transcendent meaning that was the spiritual frame for the popular movements of the sixties—that draws upon women's experience in ways that Catharine and Kim described, that draws on the white working-class experience, that draws on minority cultures and gay and lesbian cultures. That's what's needed to pose an effective challenge to Republican neoconservatism, and to build a sense of belonging across particularity and difference.

West: That's right. An alternative social vision should emphasize commonality and frame a substantive view of how the law and political life of this country should be transformed. It's dangerous to take cultural authenticity too seriously—you can't just line up the "authentic" African Americans and redistribute resources to them. Any transformative politics has to be based on the kind of transcendent community that Peter was describing, and has to set forth a substantive theory of morality and justice to contest the politics that Clarence Thomas represents—a politics that takes food out of poor kids' mouths, denies health care to the elderly, and encourages people to see each other as competitors.

Peller: I would say we need to work from context and situation, not from overarching "theories of justice." And in this current historical situation, the African-American community should have resources redistributed to it, one of which is significant representation in the American judiciary. I'd be willing to see judicial positions distributed according to proportional racial representation, for example. But we have to understand that inclusion requires making judgments about the Black community. It's not a question of some pure authenticity—because there is no detached identity that communities have separate from each other—but of how to exercise the inevitable power to influence what it means to be Black in America—and that's the basis for opposing Thomas. Thomas represents a strand of African-American culture that is reactionary and authoritarian; multiculturalism should not be understood to mean anything goes.

West: I don't believe in proportional representation of the sort you've advocated. For me, the world is not understood in terms of one cultural group versus another—but in terms of who's progressive and who's committed to the status quo. And you can't build a movement without appealing to people's deep commonality.

Peller: Alliances are formed from people just hanging together in specific situations, not from any transcendent identity. Sometimes they last for a long time, so long that they don't seem like alliances anymore but just a single group. Or they might fall apart. But I always thought it's that openness to possibility—without trying to freeze things in advance—that's the goal of radical social transformation.

Crenshaw: I'm not ready to sign off on some transcendent identity either—we've got too many issues of real conflict, real historical opposition between groups. There's just no reason to think that we might not be in conflict with, say, elite white males, for a long time to come.

West: I think when we look back on the civil-rights movement, what we see driving people spiritually is exactly the desire for a transcendent connection—a form of universalism that's not like the liberal version because it's never posed as being in possession of anyone at any particular time. Instead, people were able to link their particularity to a deeper universality that was always in the making, but never fixed and always aspirational. That's the kind of progressive vision that we need to articulate as an alternative to the individualist competitiveness and lack of empathy that Clarence Thomas represents. □

FICTION

The Plagues

Moacyr Scliar

Translated from the Portuguese by Eloah F. Giacomelli

THE WATERS ARE TURNED TO BLOOD

Our life was regulated by a seemingly eternal and immutable cycle. Periodically, the waters of the great river would rise, inundating the fields almost as far as our house; afterward they would recede, leaving a coat of fertile slime upon the soil. It was then the planting season. We would plow the land, sow the wheat, and months later, the golden spikes would be swaying in the sun.

And then came the harvest season, and the harvest festival, and again the floods. Year after year.

We were happy. Occasionally we had problems: an illness in the family, or a quarrel, but by and large we were happy, if happy is the right adjective to qualify a life without major worries or fears. Of course, we were poor; there were many things that we did not have. But what we lacked did not seem important to us.

There were six of us in the small house: my parents, my two brothers, my sister, and I. All of us devoted ourselves to our agricultural tasks. Later I was to learn the craft of writing; it was my father's wish. I think that he wanted me to tell this story, so here it is.

One afternoon we happened to be strolling, as was our wont, along the riverbank when my sister noticed something strange. Look at the color of the water, she said. I looked and at first I saw nothing unusual. The water was muddy, for our river was not one of those mountain brooks with crystalline waters that run friskily amid the stones; it was a mighty waterway that came from far away, flowing sluggishly, and dragging with it the soil of the banks (But what did we care? It was not our soil). A huge animal, quiet but powerful, this river, which had over the centuries gained the right to its wide bed. It was by no means a beautiful river; but then we did not want it to beautify the landscape—we wanted it to integrate itself into the cycle of our lives, of our work, and in this respect it fit the bill. There was no need for us to contemplate it in ecstasy. Our secret gratitude was enough.

But there was indeed something strange. The color of the waters tended toward red rather than the usual ocher. Red? It had no part in our lives. There was nothing red around us; no red flowers, for instance. As a matter of fact, flowers were something we never planted. We could not allow ourselves such indulgences. On the other hand, it is true that sometimes at sunset the sky was painted in various colors, scarlet being one of them. But by that time we were already back home. We went to bed early.

My sister (one day she may well be acknowledged as a leading exponent of the new scientific spirit) halted. Surprised, the rest of us halted too. Then leaving us behind, leaving behind the familiar group, her own family, the flesh of her flesh, the blood of her blood (attention, here: the blood of her blood)—she moved forward, as vivacious as ever, and entered the river. She stooped down to pick up something, which she then examined attentively before bringing it to us.

"What is it?" asked Father, and I noticed the furrow in his brow; a furrow that rarely appeared but when it did it was an ominous sign, as were certain black birds that sometimes fluttered over the region, invariably heralding the death of one of our rare neighbors.

"Don't you people know what it is?" replied my sister, with that superior smile of hers that so irritated Mother: This girl thinks she knows everything, but she still hasn't found a way of freeing us from poverty. "It's a clot. A blood clot."

Strange: a blood clot floating on the waters of our river. Father, who always felt that he was under an obligation to provide an explanation (logical, if at all possible) for everything, suggested that it might be the blood of an animal that had perhaps been immolated in the river. There are superstitious people, he assured us, who resort to such practices to control nature, hoping to harmonize the flux and reflux of the river with the planting season. Sheer nonsense, explicable in terms of the eternal warped notions of human beings.

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Yes—but what about the coloring of the water? About this, he did not say anything, and neither did we ask.

We returned home. My sister and I were walking side by side, in silence. Then all of a sudden: Father is wrong, she said, and I was seized with fear. A daughter talking like this about her father? A girl who, strictly speaking, should stay home to help her mother, and who only came to the fields as a special privilege accorded to her by the head of the family? But, unaware of my perturbation, she went on: With one of those gadgets capable of magnifying the size of things enormously, she said, we would see corpuscles of various sizes. Some are reddish, and they can color a liquid; others are whitish.

"In other words," she concluded, staring at me fixedly, "the river has been turned to blood."

Blood! Yes, it was blood and I had known it all along. Except that, unlike her, I had not had the nerve to utter the word, far less say it with such confidence and easiness. Blood!

Father either had not heard or he pretended that he had not. But on the following days, even he had to admit that there was in fact a transformation. The river that flowed before us was a river of blood. And there was no possible explanation for this fact. Not even from the veins of all the animals in the world, slaughtered simultaneously, could such a torrent gush out. We were confronting an extraordinary and terrifying phenomenon. Mother wept day and night, convinced that the end was near.

My older brother, a practical-minded lad (and perhaps for this reason Father's favorite), thought that we could take advantage of the situation by selling the blood to foreign armies, for as everybody knows hemorrhage is a common cause of death among badly wounded soldiers. However, this was not going to be possible: Even in the waters of the river, and at the slightest manipulation or turbulence, the blood immediately cohered in clots. Of a colossal size. Every so often, we saw monkeys perched on them.

Father did not let himself become discouraged. He lost no time in trying to find a solution to the problem. Before long, he discovered that he could get clear water by digging wells along the bank of the river; it seemed that the sand of the river bank filtered out the blood. (All of the blood? Even those elementary particles that my sister had been talking about? I didn't dare to ask her. Neither did she say anything about this matter. The particles in question were added to the list of embarrassing matters, never verbalized, that exist in every family, to a greater or lesser extent. Unuttered words haunt homes like specters, especially on stifling nights when people, their eyes wide open, unable to sleep, look fixedly at the same point in the ceiling. At the very place where, in the attic, a skeleton remains unburied.)

We built a cistern. Day and night, without stopping, we would pour ewers of water into it. And thus we had enough water to drink, to cook, to irrigate the crops, until one day the waters of the river began to clear up. The blood clots disappeared. Apparently, things were getting back to normal. We've won, Father shouted as Mother wept for joy.

The Frogs

As it turned out, Father's exultation was premature. One day, a frog appeared in our kitchen. Frogs were not a rare sight in the region, and that one was an absolutely ordinary frog, of a size and appearance normal in such batrachians. It was surprising, though, that it had ventured this far; however, the fact merited only a good-humored remark on Father's part. On that same day we came upon several other frogs in the cultivated fields; and down by the river there were dozens of them croaking endlessly. This was now rather intriguing but, as Father stated, still within the normal limits, considering that wide variations are not unusual in natural phenomena.

Still, it was an awful lot of frogs.... And on the following days their number increased even more. The situation was becoming unpleasant. It was impossible to walk without trampling on frogs; at mealtimes we had to remove them from the table so that we could eat, and at night we found them in our cots.

But even so, we did not lose our sense of humor. My younger brother even adopted one of the batrachians as a pet. For several days, he took the little frog with him everywhere he went; he would feed it flies and rock it to sleep. One night the frog ran away; it was impossible to tell it apart from the thousands, millions of other frogs that were now leaping here, there, and everywhere. Father would laugh at the boy's distress, but Mother was not amused: Removing so many frogs from the house was getting to be quite a chore.

My older brother was already thinking of turning the situation to our advantage. There are people who eat frogs, he assured us. The meat has a delicate flavor, it's like chicken.

"Of course, we can use only the thighs, but if we wash them quickly in cold water; if we steep them in a marinade of wine with nutmeg and pepper; if we soak them in milk; if we coat them with flour; if we fry them in butter; and finally, if we arrange them on a platter, we'll have, I'm sure, a delicious dish. Actually, it's just a matter of promoting the recipes skillfully and of marketing

We invite you to use this as a supplement to (not a replacement for) the traditional High Holiday confessional prayer "Al Cheyt." Please detach at the perforated line.

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

Although we realize that we did not create the world we were born into, we nevertheless have a responsibility for what it is like as long as we participate in it.

Despite the ending of the cold war and the growing recognition that there is no longer any serious external threat to America's security, we live in a society that pours huge sums of money into meaningless military expenditures while ignoring the plight of the hungry, the homeless, and the poor. We participate in an economy that squanders the world's scarce resources and destroys the life-support systems of the planet, all in the name of the "freedom" of individual corporations to amass endless profits without concern for the well-being of the rest of the human race. Our Jewish heritage teaches us that even though we may not have personally created these policies and this social system, to the extent that we participate in this society and benefit from its wealth and power, we are also morally responsible for these sins.

The requirement to take collective moral responsibility for our world makes it necessary for us to atone for what is being done in the name of the Jewish people. This year we are particularly hopeful that peace negotiations will bring lasting peace and security to Israel. But we are also aware that the government of Israel refuses to acknowledge the rights of Palestinians, refuses to allow them to choose their own representatives to engage in negotiations, and maintains that Israel will never exchange land for peace. Given these positions, the Occupation is likely to continue—and so too will the suffering of the Palestinian people and of the many Israelis who attempt to enforce the Occupation. The B'Tselem report on torture by Israelis of Palestinian civilians, printed in this issue of *Tikkun,* cannot be ignored. Israel claims to be acting in the name of the Jewish people—and it is as proud Jews that we must take collective responsibility for Israel and repent for its misdeeds even as we rejoice in its many virtues.

We understand that the Jewish people did not create the circumstances that now place Israel in the role of governing more than one-and-a-half million Palestinians. Jews needed a haven from the oppression they faced in Europe and in Arab lands—but in order to create that refuge, Jews' own needs for national self-determination were set in opposition to the Palestinian people's need for their own homeland. The attempt by Saddam Hussein to manipulate anger at the Jewish people to cover his own crimes, as well as the growth of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, remind us how important it is to us to have a strong and secure Israel. Yet as Jews we must also take responsibility for *not* having done all that we could to resolve the conflict with the Palestinian people in these past years, and for allowing the government of Israel to speak in an insensitive way and to act in an arrogant manner toward those Palestinians who for decades have languished in refugee camps and in exile from their homeland.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is *our* struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could on either the personal or social fronts in the past year, we ask God and each other for collective forgiveness—and commit ourselves to acting differently this next year.

על חטא FOR OUR SINS

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

Ve-all kulam Eloha selikhot, selakh lanu, mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the sins of not doing enough to challenge sexist institutions and practices;

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

For the sins of allowing our society to give low pri-

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ority to the fight against AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's and other diseases;

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

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

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

And for the sins of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children;

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

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

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

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

For the sins of withholding love and support;

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

For the sins of not trusting others or ourselves;

And for the sins of thinking that we didn't really need to rely on others and could do everything ourselves;

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

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

For sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

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

על חטא FOR OUR SINS

וְעַל כּוּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ	*Ve-all kulam Eloha*
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,	*selikhot, selakh lanu,*
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.	*mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.*

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

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

For the sins of not doing enough for Soviet Jews or other Jews fleeing anti-Semitism;

And for the sins of caring only about the oppression of Jews and not giving energy and attention to helping others who are fleeing oppression;

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

And for the sins of not recognizing the humanity and pain of the Israeli people or for blaming the conflict with the Palestinians entirely on the Jewish people or Israelis or Zionism;

For the sins of not fostering a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians;

And for the sins of ignoring the racism of Jews towards Arabs;

For the sins of allowing the beating, gassing, shooting, and killing of Palestinians to continue;

And for the sins of denying Palestinians in the Territories fundamental human rights;

For the sins of focusing only on Israel's sins without also acknowledging the intransigence and insensitivity of the PLO and the violence against suspected collaborators;

And for the sins of ignoring the victims of Palestinian terrorism;

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

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

For the sins of not learning more of our Jewish heritage and tradition;

And for the sins of not giving enough time and energy to building the kind of Jewish community we desire but instead expecting things to happen without contributing to make them happen;

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

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

For the sins of not sharing responsibility for child-rearing;

And for the sins of not taking care of each other;

For the sins of not having compassion for each other;

And for the sins of always having to be right;

For the sins of focusing only on our sins and not on our strengths and beauties;

And for the sins of not adequately rejoicing and celebrating the beauty and grandeur of God's creation;

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

וְעַל כּוּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ	*Ve-all kulam Eloha*
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,	*selikhot, selakh lanu,*
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.	*mekhal lanu, kaper lanu.*

Composed by ***Michael Lerner, editor,*** Tikkun *magazine.* For Yom Kippur, 5752; September, 1991.

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the product properly in order to overcome a natural, but inexplicable, repugnance on the part of the public."

It seemed like a good plan, but it was impossible to carry out. The entire region was having an invasion of frogs; people did not want to hear about the batrachians, much less eat them. Finally, Father became irritated. This is all the government's doing, he said, the politicians don't care a hoot about us, they only think of the farmers when it's time for them to collect taxes from us.

As if in reply to Father's complaints, on the following day a representative from the government showed up. We knew him: He used to be a neighbor of ours, a man nicknamed the Gimp because of a defect in one of his legs. Being unable to work, this man had devoted himself to witchcraft. True, without much success, but since he had influential connections, he had obtained a high-ranking post in the central administration of the government. And now he had been sent down our way to find out about the situation.

We followed him as he plodded painfully alongside the river, at times tripping over the batrachians heaped on the sand. So many frogs, he kept exclaiming, amazed, so many frogs!

"Well?" asked Father, impatient, at the end of the inspection. "Can anything be done about it?"

"Certainly." He smiled. "Just as they appeared, they can disappear."

"And what made them appear?" Father persisted.

"Don't you then know?" he asked, surprised. "It's a curse. Put on us by the workers who are erecting the monuments. They are outraged; and they say that their god is punishing us. Us, the powerful! Such gall they have!"

Father was perplexed. He never invoked the deities, for he thought that doing so would be unfair. He believed that human beings had to survive by means of their own strength, without the help of mysterious entities. Besides: Us, powerful? We who always toiled arduously, we who never exploited anybody? Perplexed and outraged, Father stood there. The wizard promised that the frogs would be eradicated within a short period of time, a promise that pacified Father somewhat but left my kid brother disconsolate. Bursting into tears, he asked the man to spare his pet frog, wherever it was. The man promised to take his request into consideration. He did not.

Mosquitoes, Flies

The frogs disappeared, but a few days after they were gone, clouds of mosquitoes invaded the region, attacking us fiercely. We could not work, we could not sleep; the mosquitoes gave us no respite. My sister put forth the hypothesis of an environmental disequilibrium (the frogs, she said, had devoured the mosquitoes; after the killing of the batrachians the insects began to proliferate) and my older brother was thinking of marketing an insect repellent made of cow dung—but Father was sick and tired of explanations and daring projects. He kept killing the mosquitoes with his big hands:

"I'll show this god! I'll show him!"

It was all in vain. When the mosquitoes finally disappeared, the flies came—huge gadflies that buzzed incessantly around us. They did not sting us, but they tormented us just as much as the mosquitoes had.

"Why don't they let them go?" Mother would ask, anguished. She was referring to those people that were building the monuments. We, the children, thought that letting them go would be a logical arrangement, but Father was becoming increasingly more indignant. No, he did not want them to go; he did not even know them, but he wanted them to stay; now he wanted them to stay.

"To see how far this god of theirs will go. Just to see how far he'll go. Blood, frogs, mosquitoes, flies, I want to see how far he'll go," he would say while furiously milking the cows (we had two), which kept tossing their tails in a vain attempt to protect themselves from the pertinacious gadflies.

Pestilence

One morning one of the cows was found dead. This time Mother lost her patience. She started to scream at her husband, accusing him of having mistreated the animal, thus causing its death. Father said nothing. He was staring fixedly at his own arm, where he saw the first in a series of

Boils

Could there be a link between the man's gaze and the boil? Could the intense emotion of that fixed stare, in which hatred and defiance, bitterness and even irony were blended together (in varying proportions depending on the particular moment), have induced a pathological process in the integument of this man, a process that initially manifested itself as a painful bump, which soon turned into a fetid ulcer? My sister did not have an answer to this question; neither she nor anyone else. As for Father, he remained silent. Even when the lesions spread all over his body, even when they began to appear in his wife and children, he still said nothing. Clamping his jaws shut, he would set to work with a vengeance, plowing and sowing and pulling out the weeds with fury. In spite of everything, there was going

to be a bumper crop. Or so we hoped until we were struck by

HAIL

It happened unexpectedly: One afternoon, heavy clouds obscured the sun, the wind began to blow—and all of a sudden we were pelted with pebbles of ice, some as big as a clenched fist. Part of the wheat field was destroyed. Father, immobile, his expression somber, seemed bewildered by this disaster. For how much longer, my sister heard him say, for how much longer? And, we had to admit, even an expert in weather forecasting would be unable to provide a satisfactory answer to this question. Moreover, the next plague had nothing to do with meteorology. Soon we would be confronting the

GRASSHOPPERS!

The days go by, and one afternoon we are all sitting in front of our house, when a neighbor comes running to us. Gasping for breath, he breaks the news to us: The grasshoppers are coming. An immense cloud, driven by the strong wind from the south. Yet another plague!

Father rises to his feet. On his face, an expression of determination:

"That's enough! That's enough now!" We're going to put up a fight, he decides. With every power we have, we're going to fight the designs of this god whom we don't know, whom we don't worship, and who has been using us for his obscure purposes. Who is this god, after all? Father cries out, and his voice echoes in the distance. With no reply.

He devises a plan of action. About gods, he knows nothing; but he does know all there is to know about grasshoppers. Voracious insects that can finish off what is left of the wheat field in no time flat. We've got to prevent them from alighting. How? By making noise, says Father. An awful lot of noise, without any letup. The noise will frighten the grasshoppers away. The noise will save us from this evil.

At dawn the following day we position ourselves on the edge of the cultivated field. In single file, immobile, facing south: Mother, the firstborn, myself, my sister, the baby of the family. Each of us holding a bowl (five altogether: all we've got) and a stone. We stand there, immobile; only the wind ruffles our hair. How do I know this? Well it's true that the wind is ruffling their hair: my siblings', my mother's, my father's; but I can't see the wind ruffling mine, no, this I can't. I do feel something on my scalp, though: It could be the wind ruffling my hair, but it could be an error of judgment, for my hair is cut short, much shorter than theirs (I like to wear it closely cropped) and it is stiff: Of course, it is badly in need of a wash. It could be an error of judgment caused by my desire to have the wind ruffle my hair the way it is ruffling theirs. Or it could be my anxiety.... In short, I have been seized by doubt, and I believe (inasmuch as it is possible for a skeptic to believe) that this doubt will never relinquish its hold on me. God has succeeded in carrying out his designs.

Father, his forehead creased, reviews his small army. He counts on us; or he imagines that he can count on us, that we are with him. Are we? Speaking for myself: I am. But am I really? Entirely? Completely? But what about these indefinable feelings? And what about these harrowing doubts? God now dwells in me. Inside me he will grow, and he will prosper, and he will triumph. I am lost. We are lost.

We look southward. Southward and upward. Father is now standing by my side. I can only look at him sideways; I can't look him in the eye, but I can guess the multiple components present in his gaze: Hatred. Bitterness. Disbelief. Mockery. Helplessness.

"Why?" is a question, among many others, held within this gaze. A mute, agonized question.

All of a sudden, a dry rustling. My hair, I can feel it (or I think I can), stands on end. Anxious, I scan the horizon; there, a dark cloud begins to emerge. Thin and small at first, it soon grows bigger and denser. It's the grasshoppers. Carried by the warm wind.

It takes them but a few minutes to get where we stand. A nightmare, those billions of insects buzzing around us.

"Noise!" father shouts out, but his voice is muffled by the frightful drone of the grasshoppers. "Noise!"

So noise is what we make, banging away on our bowls as if possessed. But it is in vain: The cloud of grasshoppers has already alighted, and the ground is covered with a moving mass.

"The wheat field!" shouts Father. We run there, and with our hands and feet we try to remove the creatures. Before long, however, we give up; the entire field of wheat, or what was left of it after the hail, has already been devoured—spikes, leaves, stems, everything. The baby of the family, amused, laughs and claps his hands; in his innocence, he thinks that it is all a game. Pipe down, bellows my older brother, and bug off. Let him have some fun, shouts Mother amid the infernal noise of the grasshoppers. He's a child, he's innocent. And at least one of us is not suffering. My brother, full of distrust (such is the consequence of this calamity: a son, and the eldest one too, begins to distrust his own mother), makes no reply. He continues to bang on his

bowl, already badly battered.

My sister picks up one of the insects, and proceeds to examine it, oblivious to what is happening around her.

"Yes," she murmurs, "they're grasshoppers alright. But. . . . "

"But what?" I yell, impatient. "What new discovery have you made? Is it of any significance?"

My sister shakes her head.

"I don't know. They do look odd to me, these creatures."

Father draws closer. Ashen-faced, he looks at us. He shivers as if he had a fever, his teeth chatter. He asks my sister something; she doesn't understand. He repeats his question: He wants to know if grasshoppers are edible. Alarmed, my sister and I exchange glances—could it be that this latest tragedy has made him lose his mind? But she is not one to lose her sangfroid in a situation like this: Yes, she replies warily, there are people in the South who eat grasshoppers.

Father then scoops up a handful of grasshoppers and begins to devour them. He exhorts us to do the same: Eat, eat while they still have our wheat inside them. We avert our eyes from this scene. Father starts vomiting: Let's take him home, says my older brother in an imperative tone of voice. The voice of someone taking control: A father who quails before grasshoppers, a father who vomits (albeit after ingesting the insects) is not worthy of trust. He cannot head a family. Following our brother, we march toward our house. The baby of the family is quiet, strangely quiet. He is, as later I will deduce, the bearer of one of those secret premonitions that sometimes befall young children, enabling them to foresee, several days in advance,

The Death of the Firstborn

During the days when Father, delirious from a high fever, was confined to bed, my older brother took charge of the family. He would milk the only cow we had left, and distribute the milk among us while expounding on his plans: He intended to bury the dead grasshoppers, and in this way fertilize the soil; later he was going to install a watermill to grind the wheat and then export the flour thus produced to far-off regions. And he was counting on us to help him carry out this intensive program of work.

In the meantime, Father recovered from his illness. He resumed his place at the head of the table (even though there was no food to eat); and again he was ordering us around in his booming authoritative voice. Which my older brother could not accept. He simply could not reconcile himself to the situation. Stubbornly, he refused to obey; one day, in the presence of the whole family, Father cursed him. Affronted, my brother demanded a retraction. And since Father would not comply with his demand, he left the room, slamming the door behind him. On the following day a messenger arrived with the news: All the firstborn were doomed. The Angel of Death would soon be passing through in order to smite them with his sword. All of us happened to be at the table at the time; the reaction of my older brother was astonishing. Atremble, he rose to his feet, his eyes bulging:

"Why me? Why me, when I've always helped around the house, when I've always looked after my brothers and sister? Why should I die? Is it fair? Tell me: Is it fair?"

The baby of the family was laughing, thinking it was all in fun (and in fact, my older brother was always very playful with him). Father remained quiet and motionless; as for my sister and me, we averted our eyes. My older brother then ran into Mother's arms, and bursting into tears, he cried convulsively for. . . . How long? I don't know. I didn't pay much attention to the passage of time then, to the days that kept flowing slowly and heavily like the logs that drifted down the river. But he must have cried for a long time. Suddenly he raised his head and stared at us in a challenging way. I'm not going to surrender, he said. I'm not going to die without putting up a fight. Then he opened the door and left the house. He was eighteen years old.

He did not return home that day; nor did he return on the following day. Had he run away? Had he been struck by the Angel of Death, like a leaping deer felled by a spear? Our fears were groundless. He returned at nightfall, exhausted but seething with excitement. He had, he announced, something of great importance to impart: He had discovered a way of evading sure death.

"Yes, the Angel of Death will smite every firstborn child. But he will pass over the houses whose doorways are marked with the blood of an animal killed as a sacrifice."

We stood looking at him. The baby of the family, very astounded. My sister and I, rather astounded. Father and Mother—well, I don't know; if they were astounded, they did not manifest their astonishment. But regardless of the degree of individual astonishment, we all stood there motionless, our eyes fixed on him.

"But can't you understand?" he shouted. "I'm safe. Practically safe!"

Practically: It was what he said. Later on I even checked with my sister, who confirmed: Yes, he did say *practically safe*. And ever since that moment I have been wondering if it could have been the word *practically*—which at the time struck me as rather unusual, even strange and suspicious, a word tinged with malignity (the subsequent events were to confirm this

unfavorable impression; only recently, after I became more familiar with words and certain facts of life, have I been able to accept, although with some nervousness, the adverb. *Practically*! I shudder)—I have been wondering, as I was saying, if it could have been this word, so odd, to say the least, if not sinister, as I have said earlier—if it could have been this word, this *practically* that precipitated everything: Because, all of a sudden, he ran up to my father, grabbed him by the shoulders, and started to shake him (he was strong, this lad, except that his strength was of no help to him):

"I'm safe, Father! All you have to do is to sacrifice an animal. Kill the cow. Collect the blood in a pail, then pour the blood over our door. Use plenty of blood, all of it, so that the Angel of Death will have no doubt about it; so that he will pass over our house; so that he will go away; so that he will spare me!"

They stood gazing at each other at that moment. What kind of gaze it was (the son's, the father's) I had no way of knowing. They were standing in profile to me. I could see their noses, their compressed lips; but I could not see their eyes. If I were endowed with an unusual imagination, I could have made their gaze visible (in the form, say, of luminous rays varying in color and intensity), but even so, how to interpret the expression in their eyes? And what is more—in the perfect superposition of the luminous radiations, how to tell apart the look of the father from the look of the son? How to fit the expression in their eyes into the complex classification of feelings and emotions devised by human beings, especially when at the time I was far from being familiar with such classification? Even if I had been face-to-face with my father and my brother, I don't think I would have been able to describe the expression in their eyes adequately. Actually, I don't even know if they were in fact looking at each other. They were standing face-to-face; but one of them, the older man or the younger man, could have been watching the south, could have been watching the north, could have been watching the spot from where the Angel of Death would supposedly come. But who would be capable of identifying the components of such a look? Or to put it in a different way: How does a person wait for death (in general)? How does a person wait for death, when it is his own death? How does a person wait for death, when it is the death of his firstborn? A father looking at a son who is about to die, a son looking at a father who will die later—who is capable of describing such a gaze? Such are the dilemmas that appear in times of plagues.

The firstborn loosened his grip, and his arms fell to his sides, helpless. You are not going to kill the cow, he mumbled. Yes, it was more than a supposition, it was an assertion, but what the hell did he mean? That we were unwilling to save his life? That we should not kill the cow, now our only source of nourishment? That he loved the cow, whose milk he had drunk ever since he was a child? In short, what was he talking about?

We never knew. Without a sigh, he collapsed heavily to the floor. Father still tried to catch him in his fall, but he simply could not hold him: He was too frail. Nobody had ever obtained proper nourishment from grasshoppers.

We buried our brother on the following morning. As we learned later, he was not the only firstborn that was buried that day. But—it was the last of the plagues to afflict us. Since then, no god has bothered us. At least not significantly; now and then there has been a crop failure, or a minor disaster, but nothing serious. Nothing serious. One could say the following (and it is not one of the most pompous statements that a person can use to end a narrative): Life follows its course in a seemingly eternal cycle. □

New York Wedding

From *Ten Divorce Sonnets*

Hilene Flanzbaum

My uncles had to wait for the Sabbath
to end and arrived late. It was July,
ninety-eight degrees as we said our vows.
So handsome—he wore a gray tuxedo
and his shoulders were huge under a white
canopy. We spoke Hebrew, understanding
nothing we said. I watched his lips moving.
He shattered the glass and we were married.

That night at a Holiday Inn beside
the airport I cried and did not know why.
Bare-chested, he took the stationery
from the drawer and began to add
the checks we'd received, came to a total
that was staggering and then took my hand.

Hilene Flanzbaum recently completed a Ph.D. dissertation on Robert Lowell. Her poems have appeared in Ploughshares, Pequod, *and* Seattle Review.

Current Debate: The Politics of Populism

The People, Right and Wrong

Michael Kazin

Christopher Lasch's challenging new book, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics,* appears at a time of ideological paralysis—in the United States as well as in the world at large. The total collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (and its loss of legitimacy everywhere) has thrown the traditional project of the Left into turmoil, if not entirely into history's dustbin. Even those socialists who never succumbed to the cruel fantasy of Leninism are now forced to ponder how to achieve economic leveling and social equality while also nurturing entrepreneurs and free markets. The Right, still smugly celebrating a painless victory it believed would never occur, blithely denies that famine, environmental disasters, and brutal regional wars (and the arms races that precede and follow them) have anything to do with colonialism and capitalism. In this country, intellectuals and activists who once proudly embraced such labels as "radical," "liberal," "Progressive," or simply "critical" flounder between contradictory positions, unable even to create a new set of names, much less to agree on a political direction.

Lasch suffers from no such disabilities. *The True and Only Heaven* offers a thoroughgoing critique of optimistic, modernizing individualists on both the Left and Right and proposes "populism" as the way out. Actually, only the last chapter of the book (and parts of the introduction) take on contemporary matters directly; the rest is a complex, often original reading of thinkers from Machiavelli to Seymour Martin Lipset who have wrestled with the nature and sources of political change and social status. But Lasch's energetic, combative conclusion flows naturally from the whole book's stern if carefully modulated historical judgments; his polemical style leaves no doubt what kind of politics one should adopt after being disabused of the virtues of "progress."

Populism, for Lasch, is an ideology of limits. In the name of populism, he opposes the corporate gospel of perpetual economic growth and the consumerism that feeds it. He regards busing, legalized abortion, and affirmative action as arrogant creations of "business and professional classes" who will not be content until the backward masses think and act as they do. He links the dissatisfaction of many Americans with their jobs to the lack of work "that might evoke a sense of calling." He lambastes the media for projecting a seductive "vision of the good life, one that mocks decent people with the promise of sudden wealth and glamour." Lasch rehearsed elements of this jeremiad almost fifteen years ago in *Haven in a Heartless World* and *The Culture of Narcissism.* But until now, he never cast it as a full-fledged alternative worldview, the basis for a new politics.

Lasch's populists, in the nineteenth century as well as today, are people who counter the ill-considered rush to "improve" societies and individuals. Their opposition is grounded in a powerful ethos of self-respect, rooted in vital neighborhoods, family-centered cultures, and artisanal traditions. A century ago, the populists came mainly from the ranks of small farmers and skilled workers; now, the author implies with numerous examples, they are mainly to be found among those he calls the petty bourgeoisie—mostly Catholic and ethnically conscious workers and small businesspeople in communities like South Boston and Brooklyn's Canarsie. These people share a pride in their hard work and values of self-discipline; they pugnaciously resist elites who belittle their culture and want to make them over. Lasch allows that populism "does not provide a ready-made set of answers" to the problems of the modern world. But he believes it does offer a sober, reliable alternative to the furies that are destroying the environment, impoverishing millions of people, and deluding us with visions of grandeur and excess.

Here, as in everything Lasch writes, he strikes some critical chords accurately and often eloquently. With devastating cogency, he explains why liberals keep suffering continual defeat. The intellectuals and policymakers who compose what he disparagingly calls "the civilized minority" never seem to learn that social programs that are neither desired nor controlled by the

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people they affect always fail to achieve their aims and sow long and deep resentments against their makers. And Lasch is also correct, though hardly original, to press the link between a devotion to progress and the ecological crisis. We can no longer assume that "they"—some cadre of experts—will discover a way simultaneously to stop global warming and spread air-conditioned abundance to all who may desire it. A democratic ethic of limits is necessary, and its application must be both collective and personal. At its best, Lasch's brand of populism represents an intellectual marriage of economic grievances long voiced by the Left with a tempered defense of "traditional" values articulated by the New Right.

Racial distinctions among "the people" almost invariably define how the issue is resolved—in the streets, at the polls, in every civic institution.

Yet I find Lasch to be a far less reliable guide when he moves from criticism to advocacy. His populism is seriously flawed, both as a historical account and, more significantly, as a solution to contemporary ills. In effect, he substitutes a romantic image of a certain "people" for the elitist creed he abhors.

First, the original American Populists—the only ones entitled to capitalize the term—were not merely the defenders of harmonious communities, small property-holding, and artisanal values whom Lasch (following the interpretation of Lawrence Goodwyn's study *Democratic Promise*) praises so highly. Where it achieved greatest electoral success—in such states as Kansas, Texas, and Alabama—the People's Party was also a vehicle for Protestant moral reformers who championed prohibition, attacked immigrant urban bosses, and sometimes viewed Catholics as agents of a "papist" conspiracy to strangle American liberties. The Populists, writes political scientist Michael Rogin, were "known as the party of righteousness, and such groups as the Germans feared for their Sunday cards and beer."

Ironically, Lasch himself discussed this side of Gilded Age Populism when he wrote *The Agony of the American Left* (published in 1969). But in his current desire for a usable past, he forgets that many of his nineteenth-century heroes and heroines were just as bent on "improving" America as were their corporate and major-party foes. The problem wasn't some Hegelian notion of progress; it was a specific order, ruled by big business and the worship of Mammon. And the changes the Populists proposed for the U.S.—like nationalizing the railroads and the telegraph and telephone systems as well as the moralist agenda—were quite radical ones which would have created a much more democratic, though probably less libertarian, capitalism.

The same avoidance of uncomfortable contradictions hampers Lasch's account of recent and present-day populists, few of whom would have felt comfortable around their supposed doctrinal forebears who aimed to destroy political machines and the saloons that anchored them. For instance, he acknowledges that, during the school desegregation crisis of the mid-1970s, Irish Catholics in South Boston waved signs that read "Bus the Niggers back to Africa." But he maintains the real issue there was a "cultural class war" begun by well-heeled suburban liberals who usually sent their own children to private schools. Besides his silence about the black Bostonians who suffered the most in this conflict, Lasch's account is strangely ahistorical—especially for such a distinguished scholar in the field. The residents of South Boston (and their counterparts in Cicero, Howard Beach, Bensonhurst, and other places from the 1960s to the present) were hardly the first working people to work out their social grievances on the bodies of the racially stigmatized. The miners during the California Gold Rush who burned down Chinese camps, the industrial laborers in Chicago after World War I who attacked black neighborhoods with clubs and guns, and the sailors in Los Angeles during World War II who stripped zoot suits off young Chicanos were all acting out resentments traceable, in part, to class inequality.

But the fact that each band of marauders made the people of another *race* their primary target testifies to an enduring truth about American political consciousness. Whether or not modernizing elites set one group of ordinary folks against another (as certainly occurred in Boston, though unwittingly), racial distinctions among "the people" almost invariably define how the issue is resolved—in the streets, at the polls, in every civic institution. One should reject the charge that racism is the *only* reason why most whites (from all classes by the way) have turned against programs like AFDC, open housing, and affirmative action; fears of violent crime and of losing a desirable job to a less-qualified applicant are real enough. But it is equally myopic to argue that animosities would decrease dramatically if liberal judges and bureaucrats just stopped pushing white ethnics around.

When Lasch turns to abortion, his apologia for petty-bourgeois values ignores the kinds of human concerns

that "progressives" allegedly scorn. Abortion, he writes, "is not just a medical issue or even a woman's issue that has become the focus of a larger controversy about feminism. It is first and foremost a class issue." To support this, Lasch lines up quotations from pro-choice activists who favor eugenic engineering alongside ones from right-to-lifers who commonsensically defend motherhood for both moral and biological reasons. "You can't plan everything in life," says one of the latter.

No doubt there are cold-hearted, "elitist" characters who favor choice and warm, relaxed working-class people who oppose it. Large political movements always attract a variety of personality types. But Lasch's terse analysis leaves out some messy details: the young, poor women numbering in the hundreds of thousands who each year beg and borrow to pay for abortions in order to avoid a life-sentence in the underclass; and the millions of women from all classes who were seriously harmed by self-administered or botched abortions in the years before *Roe v. Wade* and will be victimized again if the right-to-lifers get their legal way. Few of these women are amoral apostles of "progress." Each simply wants to exercise what might be called the core value of populism—the ability to make a decision that irrevocably affects her life.

My point here is not, in some fit of political correctness, to accuse Lasch of being racist or sexist. He is neither. But his failure to even mention the reasons why women have always sought abortions, and blacks have feared close-knit white communities, betrays a failure of his alternative vision. He seems to have no regard or respect for the pain of anyone outside the charmed circle of petty-bourgeois traditionalists. This is perhaps the major reason why, regrettably, many feminist and black intellectuals tend to dismiss Lasch's recent work as a whole. Because he does not sympathetically engage the evidence and arguments of his critics, his endorsement of a grand populist coalition sounds like a cursory afterthought, devoid of even a rhetorical strategy that might coax it into being.

Finally, Lasch's perceptions of the very people he praises lack a certain realism, an understanding that white working people too have aspirations for "self-improvement," which any serious oppositional politics must address. *The True and Only Heaven* describes consumerism in pathological terms: Advertising and television, both controlled by rootless professionals, promote a form of mass "addiction" in which "the need for novelty and fresh stimulation becomes more and more intense, intervening interludes of boredom increasingly intolerable." Lasch's "decent people" are supposedly repulsed by this media-driven epidemic, but he gives no details.

There is good reason to be reticent. Few Americans have, in fact, turned off their TVs, stopped gossiping about the sex lives of the famous, or switched from new, mass-produced goods to handmade items (and those who have are more likely to live in Big Sur than Canarsie). While mass culture obviously contains trivial and wasteful elements, we need to appreciate why it remains so vital and popular. As Michael Schudson points out, the desire for more and better material goods (as well as the fantasies that go with them) is often a democratic impulse, particularly among people in Eastern Europe and the inner cities who have been unable to choose what they may eat, wear, and watch. Lasch's scowling language of "addiction" misses the liberating potential of such coveted objects as laptop computers and portable music-players and assumes that the average consumer is incapable of rational, self-interested behavior. For all his sensitivity to white working-class values, he fails to understand the sentiment Bruce Springsteen expressed in eighteen short words: "Now mister the day the lottery I win / I ain't never gonna ride in no used car again."

Five years ago, in the first issue of *Tikkun,* Lasch called for a politics that would transcend ideological shibboleths. "The old labels have no meaning anymore," he wrote. "They can only confuse debate instead of clarifying it. They are products of an earlier era, the age of steam and steel, and are wholly inadequate to the age of electronics, totalitarianism, and mass culture. Let us say good-bye to these old friends, fondly but firmly, and look elsewhere for guidance and moral support." *The True and Only Heaven* gives us some masterful intellectual history and a sustained argument for one type of populist alternative. But it does not explain how to translate an ideology that opposes the whole idea of transforming one's status and society into a strategy for basic change. "Moral support" is rather thin compensation for enduring conditions one finds intolerable.

For a better approach, we should look to social-democratic analysts like William Julius Wilson, Robert Kuttner, and Theda Skocpol instead of to any breed of populists. These writers and others stress the need to develop and publicize hardheaded, race-neutral programs that can convince middle- and working-class whites to support economic uplift and a national health care system. They use a language that honestly addresses divisions of race and gender without turning them into compensatory virtues, as do many activists who seem to have abandoned the search for a majoritarian politics. And they don't minimize the difficulty of the task before us: We need movements and politicians wise enough to

balance growth, equity, and care for the environment yet passionate enough to convince thousands of people to work for a dream. Lasch's own succinct definition of "the original promise of American life" does help point the way with "the hope that a self-governing republic could serve as a source of moral and political inspiration to the rest of the world, not as a center of a new world empire." But he offers nothing to get us started along the new road: no credible analysis of why the current scene is so dismal, no language of hope that might appeal to the discontented, no ideas for policies that might make fresh coalitions possible—especially across racial lines. We should heed his advice to respect how ordinary Americans live and to mistrust the plans of social engineers of any ideological persuasion. Yet we also urgently need intellectuals with populist hearts and pragmatic, politically sophisticated heads. The contemporary Right, whatever its rhetoric, will always side with the claims of the free market when they conflict with the beliefs and desires of existing communities. To counter this power, "the people" need more than understanding; they need allies. □

Through a Class Darkly

Barbara Ehrenreich

Are there two Christopher Lasches? One of them wrote a nice blurb for my book *Fear of Falling* (Pantheon, 1989), but now we have a Christopher Lasch inveighing (in *The True and Only Heaven*) against my book as yet another example of the snobbish insularity of the professional middle class. In the same pages I am reported to have "left the land of the living for a visit to the Marxist mortuary, where old revolutionary slogans lie beautifully embalmed."

The issue is the nature of the American working class or, in his terms, "lower middle class." What are its politics? Its values? Is it innately progressive? Conservative? A little of both? This is a very old debate among intellectuals of the professional middle class and assumes the murky quality of a divination because it remains, for the most part, a debate *within* the professional middle class. Working class people seldom write books, appear on talk shows, or contribute to journals—even when the subject is themselves.

I should say at the outset: In *Fear of Falling,* I made no attempt to characterize the working class as innately anything. My mission was to puncture various conceits and delusions held by the professional middle class, including its self-serving stereotypes of both the poor and the working class. In fact it was my impatience with such sweeping characterizations—whether by left- or right-wingers—that prodded me to write the book. Instead, I thought it was time to cast a critical look at the professional middle class—the group that does most of the talking, criticizing, defining, and prescribing in our society—and especially to question its cherished views of the "lower classes."

Since the end of the sixties, the middle class has stereotyped the working class as parochial, conservative, and almost certainly bigoted. This view was largely inspired by George Wallace's brief popularity among white blue-collar workers in 1968, which led the media to announce a vast blue-collar backlash against liberalism. Ever since, right-wingers have been thrilled and emboldened by the idea of a nation of Archie Bunkers, while liberals have tended to withdraw into finicky despair. Very few people of my ideological persuasion have bothered to question the by-now clichéd conventional wisdom that the working class is (take your pick): 1. brutish and Neanderthal; or 2. admirably committed to the "traditional values" of family, faith, hard work, and delayed gratification.

Among leftists, ever eager to see themselves deeply rooted in the folkways of the "masses," this stereotype became the excuse for a perverse new form of populism. Instead of winning the working class over to traditional American left-wing values such as internationalism,

Barabara Ehrenreich's most recent book is The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes on a Decade of Greed *(HarperCollins, 1990).*

tolerance, and respect for individual rights, the new populists have urged leftists to take up the values now imputed to the working class. Thus in 1982, *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner founded an outfit called "Friends of the Family," designed to snatch the "profamily" banner from the fundamentalists and attach it to a long, fluttering agenda of social democratic reforms. Communitarians took to celebrating the wisdom of "white ethnics" crouched defensively in their neighborhoods. At one point, the Revolutionary Communist Party banned oral sex as a presumably unproletarian activity and promoted short hair for men.

Lasch's *The True and Only Heaven* is the intellectual apotheosis of this stream of left-wing populism. He accepts uncritically the conventional (i.e., professional middle-class) view of the working or lower middle class as a backwater of cultural conservativism. In fact, he goes a step further, and sees the lower middle class rejecting not only the "social engineering" imposed by the professional elite (such as busing and abortion) but implicitly the entire capitalist consumer culture, with its addiction to novelty, sensation, and the idea of perpetual progress. The lower middle class doesn't want much, and this, in his view, is a good thing—because, in an ecologically precarious world, there isn't a whole lot to go around.

To return to the basic question: *Is* the working class innately conservative—either in the Right's belligerently procapitalist sense or in Lasch's greener, but no less racist, depiction?

What I pointed out in *Fear of Falling* was that, at the very moment the media were crafting the Archie Bunker stereotype, the American working class was engaged not only in scattered "backlash" activities but in a huge upsurge of strikes and job actions, involving auto workers, steel workers, truck drivers, hospital workers, farm workers, and postal workers, among others. The specific sentence that Lasch chops up in order to locate me in the "Marxist mortuary" reads as follows:

> For all the talk of racial backlash, black and white workers were marching, picketing and organizing together in a spirit of class solidarity that had not been seen since the thirties.

My point was not that the working class is innately "revolutionary," but that the stereotype was based on rather selective evidence—the antibusing movement in South Boston, for example, rather than the auto workers' insurgency in Lordstown. The mainstream media focused on the incidents of racist and illiberal backlash and barely covered the larger outbreak of strikes and job actions. (This is typical: recall the virtual noncoverage of the coal miners' strike in 1989.) In general, the media ignore the abundant evidence that the working class is *more* liberal than the professional middle class when it comes to economic and foreign policy issues.

Why is Lasch so committed to defending a noxious stereotype? Why not simply accept that, if South Boston was one expression of the white working class mood in the seventies, Lordstown (or Mahwah, New Jersey or any of scores of strike locations) was another? Or—if one concludes that racism was and is a dominant feature of white working-class culture—why not look for socially redemptive values somewhere else, such as in the consistently "progressive" *black* working class?

For Lasch, "community" outweighs "equality"; stasis is always to be preferred to the false lure of progress and change.

I am not as confident about attributing political motives to Lasch as he is to me, so I can only say that it seems, from reading the relevant chapters of *The True and Only Heaven,* that racism is a relatively incidental matter to Lasch. He says, for example, that:

> If racial enlightenment could be achieved only at the price of exile [from the white working-class community], perhaps it was time to reconsider the whole project of enlightenment.

For Lasch, "community" outweighs "equality"; stasis is always to be preferred to the false lure of progress and change. Strikes and other forms of workplace militance have to be discounted because they don't easily mesh with the values that Lasch—and right-wing populists—attribute to the white working class. After all, people strike not only in self-defense, but to achieve change, and what they themselves define as "progress."

One of the kinds of progress that Lasch seems most determined to have the working class resist is, broadly speaking, feminism. He cites Kristin Luker's study of the conflict over abortion and an unnamed "white Catholic housekeeper" to show that feminist and specifically pro-choice goals are antithetical to working class values. But a case could be made for the other side, too. Faye Ginsburg's study of pro-choice and anti-abortion activists in Fargo, North Dakota found, in contrast to Luker's findings, *no* class difference between the two sides. The anti-ERA movement was spearheaded by *middle* class women. The famed 1986 Newsweek-Gallup poll that found 56 percent of American women professing to be feminists showed no

decline in feminist identification as one went down the income scale. And for every culturally conservative "white Catholic housekeeper" Lasch can cite, I could cite nurses, clerical workers, and female factory workers of my own acquaintance expressing feminist sentiments that make *Thelma and Louise* look pale and inarticulate.

But why continue the argument? Lasch is (or at least used to be) one of the sharpest critics of the professional middle class in the business. Surely he would agree that it is time for members of this class to stop projecting their political views and hopes onto the classes "below" them. Marxist intellectuals have, indeed, often fooled themselves into believing that the working class will shape up any time now and assume its historical "mission" of revolution. The right-wingers are far worse, though: fulsomely praising the working class's supposed commitment to "hard work" while pursuing policies that continually erode the rewards of work. I see no reason—empirical or moral—why the working class should now shoulder the burden of Lasch's populism and embrace a politics of "limits" and hostility to consumer culture (which is, sadly, one of the few bright spots in lives of drab and low-paid labor).

Left-wing politics should be, above all, a politics based on moral principle. No doubt the American working class is far less feminist and generally radical than I would like it to be. I am convinced it is also far less conservative than Lasch would like it to be. So let him get out there—among the real lower middle class—and make his case. I will continue to make mine. Believe me, people will not be shy about arguing back.

But let us not shrink from the fray by constructing a politics out of what *we* think *they* think. The worst error of left-wing populism is that it attempts to short-circuit debate by advocating only what it thinks "the people" already agree on, e.g., "family values" but not racial equality. There will be no progress without dissent and debate, and—like it or not—progress, in the old-fashioned, modernist sense, is one of the values most prized within my own blue-collar family tradition. □

No Respect: A Reply to Michael Kazin and Barbara Ehrenreich

Christopher Lasch

These polemics exemplify, once again, the agony of the American Left—its inability to assimilate new information; its bafflement in the face of unfamiliar points of view; its attempt to force new arguments into the old categories of debate; its eagerness to convict opponents of insensitivity and to establish its own monopoly of compassion; its last-ditch resort to charges of racism, sexism, and other crimes against humanity. These habits of mind are the marks of political and intellectual defeat. Unable to win arguments, the Left now traffics almost exclusively in slogans and stereotypes.

In these particular samples of intellectual debility, innuendo at least prevails over outright insult—for which I suppose I should be grateful. Ehrenreich doesn't call me a racist; she merely accuses me of regarding racism as a "relatively incidental matter." Kazin takes the same tack when he says that my account of the school wars in Boston ignores the "black Bostonians who suffered the most." Kazin's otherwise undistinguished article contains a classic application of the rhetorical device known as *praeteritio*. "My point here is not, in some fit of political correctness, to accuse Lasch of being racist or sexist. He is neither." This remark calls up fond memories of third-year Latin. "I shall pass over many of Catiline's crimes in silence," Cicero declaims as he proceeds to enumerate them.

Ehrenreich resorts to a phrase so ingeniously ambiguous that its artistry may pass unnoticed. Comparing my portrait of the working class to the one painted by the Right, she refers to my "greener, but no less racist, depiction." She means that I inaccurately depict the working class as racist; but she manages to plant the suspicion that it is my account itself that is racist. Later on, she waters this suspicion and makes it grow by accusing me of projecting my own "political views and hopes"—racist views and hopes, presumably—onto an allegedly racist working class. What a conceptual muddle! My

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account was meant to *counter* charges of working-class racism, not to endorse them; racism is Ehrenreich's term, not mine. (In her world, opposition to busing still equals, automatically, racism.) But what masterly rhetoric!

The inquisitional style of public discourse, which is designed to put opponents on the defensive—to saddle them with the burden of proving their sincere and undying abhorrence of racism—should never be taken as a sign of strength. Critics of the new conformity—the new consensus about what is politically correct—see it as evidence of the Left's ideological ascendancy. But an ascendant ideology is willing to argue with opponents instead of smearing them. My own argument in this matter, contrary to the impression left by Kazin and Ehrenreich, is that racism is much too simple an explanation of working-class resistance to busing and affirmative action. I don't claim that racism has nothing to do with it, any more than I deny the racist content in some of the recent outbursts against politically correct speech and conduct on campus. I think it is a serious analytical mistake, however, to interpret racial conflicts in the seventies, eighties, and nineties as evidence of the incorrigibly retrograde outlook of ordinary Americans, as a revival, in other words, of the historic intolerance that has played so large a part in our country's history. The new racism is reactive rather than residual, let alone resurgent. It is a response, however inappropriate and offensive, to a double standard of racial justice that strikes most Americans as unreasonable and unfair. Since opposition to an "affirmative" double standard is routinely dismissed as racist, one reaction to this insult, from working- and lower middle-class people harassed by affirmative action and busing, and now from college students harassed by attempts to enforce politically correct attitudes, is to accept "racism" as a badge of honor—to flaunt it, with studied provocation, against those who want to make racism and minority rights the only subject of public conversation.

Ehrenreich has hopelessly confused these issues, both here and in *Fear of Falling.* I wrote a "nice blurb" for her book, incidentally, because I respect her lively mind, even though I seldom agree with her conclusions. Since when were respect and disagreement incompatible? In fact they are closely entwined: Reasoned disagreement (as opposed to dismissal, or again to the kind of tolerance that amounts to dismissal) is in itself an expression of respect.

My good opinion of Ehrenreich goes back to her early work on the professional-managerial class (which for some reason she now prefers to call the middle class, with a tremendous loss of clarity). My good opinion is qualified only by the observation that she puts her intelligence, too often, at the service of political dogmas that can't stand up to close analysis. Again and again, she tries to salvage left-wing pieties from her own sharp analysis, which tends to undercut them. In "The Professional-Managerial Class," she and John Ehrenreich showed that professional self-aggrandizement, usually at popular expense, was a major ingredient in twentieth-century reform movements. Yet the Ehrenreichs also argued, unconvincingly, that this same insufferably arrogant class of experts represented the best hope for social democracy. In *The Hearts of Men,* Ehrenreich showed how consumerism, in the repulsive form of the *Playboy* ethic, freed men from any lingering obligations to women. The "moral climate" of consumerism, Ehrenreich wrote, encouraged "irresponsibility, self-indulgence, and an isolationist detachment from the claims of others." Since women could no longer depend on men, they would have to depend on an "expanded welfare state." Ehrenreich acknowledged the force of the objection that a "welfare state only substitutes one kind of paternalism for another." Unable to defend the welfare state as an "ultimate social goal," she nevertheless tried to convince herself that it could somehow "work through institutions that are democratic, accountable, decentralized, and respectful of individual dignity." How any of this was possible in a moral climate of irresponsibility was left unexplained.

As long as political discussion continues to revolve around artificially opposed and largely symbolic alternatives—women's rights or the family, affirmative action or "racism"—workers can be expected to take less and less interest in politics.

In *Fear of Falling,* Ehrenreich struggles with the unwelcome but seemingly irrefutable evidence that workers have been alienated from liberalism by its identification with abortion, affirmative action, busing, and other policies that seem to exalt minority rights over the needs and interests of the majority. The constitutional status of those rights—the right to get an abortion, to attend racially integrated schools, to be given preferential treatment in hiring and university admissions—is far from self-evident, and they have never been subjected to searching congressional debate, having been proclaimed from on high by the courts. The

attempt to enforce them, in the absence of popular support, has understandably generated bitter opposition from the working-class voters who once made up the heart of the New Deal coalition.

Instead of dealing directly with evidence of working-class defections from the Democratic party, Ehrenreich tries to change the subject by attacking the stereotype of the reactionary worker as a projection of neoconservative intellectuals. There is some truth in this charge; but it doesn't add anything to our understanding to replace this stereotype with an equally stereotypical image of labor militancy. I don't dispute the salience of events in Lordstown; what I dispute is the stereotypical significance that "Lordstown," like "Boston," takes on in Ehrenreich's recent work. The point isn't that our accounts of working-class life need to balance working-class militancy against working-class racism; the point is that we need to replace "militancy" and "racism" with more informative categories. Working-class attitudes resist easy classification as liberal or conservative. They combine a commitment to egalitarianism and racial justice with a belief in personal accountability that makes working people impatient with those who trade on their privileged moral status as victims. The same complexity seems to characterize working-class views of women: on the one hand, a belief in economic opportunity for women; on the other hand, a belief in the traditional two-parent family. As long as political discussion continues to revolve around artificially opposed and largely symbolic alternatives—women's rights or the family, affirmative action or "racism"—workers can be expected to take less and less interest in politics.

A populist movement, as I conceive it, would respect popular attitudes in their complexity and ask, for example, how our politics might honor both the preference for conventional families and women's need for economic opportunity. The answer to such questions would turn out to be far more radical than anything that passes for radicalism today—the radicalism of "sensitivity" and ritual deference to victims. But a populism for the next century would also be conservative in its respect for tradition, its cultivation of common sense, and its repudiation of large-scale social engineering. The lingering influence of the old ideologies, both left and right, makes it hard for intellectuals to fathom political positions that can't be easily classified—or even to understand why we can no longer neatly distinguish between the working class and the lower middle class. Ehrenreich tries to give the impression that I prefer the latter term out of some squeamishness about the more robust term "working class"; but my point—argued at some length in *The True and Only Heaven,* though you would never know it from these reviews—is that the working class and lower middle class are converging, both in their declining economic prospects and in their outlook. Nothing is to be gained, therefore, by trying to revive a progressive coalition based on the labor unions. Unionism is no longer compelling when the boundary between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie is so vague. The proportion of unionized jobs, together with the old-time militancy, is declining—another unpleasant fact the Left prefers to ignore. Neither unionism nor the ideal of a welfare state speaks to the issues that trouble those who formerly supported progressive movements: bureaucratic, unresponsive government; the arrogance of experts; the decay of urban neighborhoods; the declining sense of obligation and accountability; the growing disrespect for law and authority; the difficulty of reconciling family commitments with full-time employment; the difficulty of raising children in a moral climate of irresponsibility.

Michael Kazin (like Ehrenreich, in her better moments) tries to be fair to both sides in this debate. He appears to make a major concession, for someone on the Left, when he endorses "race-neutral programs," but he immediately nullifies its force by advocating such programs on purely instrumental grounds, as part of a strategy designed to "convince middle- and working-class whites to support economic uplift and a national health care system." The structure of this sentence betrays him: The petty bourgeoisie is a retrograde social formation that has to be dragged into the brave new world of social democracy even if it means diluting affirmative action with a few "race-neutral programs." Kazin hasn't managed to break the habit of regarding ordinary people either as victims to be "uplifted," or as rednecks and racists to be cajoled or re-educated or circumvented by reliance on the courts. Accustomed to a mode of discourse in which claims to preferential treatment rest on the public display of pain and suffering, he misreads my defense of petty-bourgeois values as a defense of a brand new class of victims. He complains that I seem "to have no regard or respect for the pain of anyone outside the charmed circle of petty-bourgeois traditionalists."

Respect, of course, is just what is withheld by our culture's fascination with pain, suffering, and "conditions one finds intolerable." We pity those who suffer, but we reserve respect for those who refuse to exploit their suffering for the purposes of pity. To state my position in a nutshell: A democratic politics has to rest on respect—on holding people accountable for their actions, challenging them to test themselves by exacting standards impartially applied—not pity, "care," and "compassion." This is a tough proposition, I know, for the caring class to accept. □

Endless Escalation: The Cold War as Postmodern Narrative

Hugh Gusterson

Since the first assignment of American troops to Korea in 1950 and to NATO in 1951, we have been told that immense and continuous American military mobilization was a provisional measure to contain the Soviet threat, especially in Europe. Now, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, many of us are surprised to find how resilient the American warfare state is, how deftly it found an Iraqi Stalin to replace the now obsolete Soviet prototype.

The peace dividend, long anticipated in the media, is beginning to look like a mirage. Although we have been living in what a vague media consensus hails as the "post–cold-war era," Pentagon cuts have so far been minimal: New weapons are being tested, troops trained, and threats assessed. While the Soviet Union has promised to close its main nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk and since October 1989 has only tested one nuclear warhead, the United States has tested nine. While the Soviet nuclear weapons laboratory at Kurachtov recently suffered a 25 percent budget cut, the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory—one of America's two laboratories where nuclear weapons are designed—was awarded a $6 million budget increase. Meanwhile the B-2 bomber, America's most extravagant weapon at $820 million apiece, just survived another round of budget cuts despite the improbability of its declared mission: destroying Soviet hard targets in a protracted nuclear war. The U.S. military is planning to augment its bombing ranges and bases by 4.5 million acres, and the recent reduction of the U.S. military budget to $288 billion will be far outweighed by the cost of the American war in the Persian Gulf.

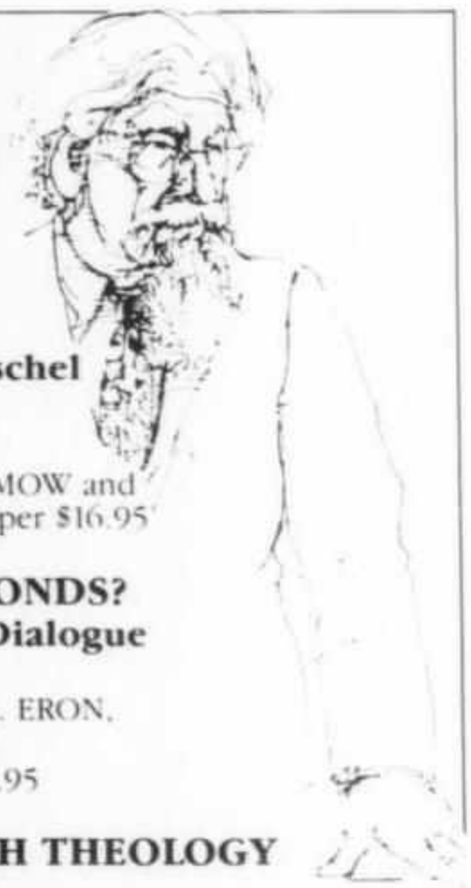
A year after the end of the cold war, it is clear that many critics of the military underestimated the power of the cold-war worldview. In the wake of the cold war's collapse, such critics conceived of the conversion of the warfare state largely as a set of economic engineering problems: how to find new products for Lockheed, how to retrain and relocate unemployed workers, how to plan cuts in military procurements. Such programmatic questions figure prominently in the literature on military conversion and in last year's congressional bills on conversion sponsored by Ted Weiss (D-N.Y.) and Nicholas Mavroules (D-Mass.). Despite these initiatives, the bureaucracy that administered the cold war remains firmly entrenched; the achievement of a "peace dividend" is thus far more than an exercise in technocratic management. "We speak," says the British historian and antinuclear activist E.P. Thompson,

> of the "military-industrial complex," or of the military "sector" or "interest" or the arms "lobby." This suggests that the evil is confined in a known and limited space.... [But] the U.S.A. and the USSR do not have military-industrial complexes: they are such complexes.

Clearly, the conversion of the cold-war economy requires more than a narrow economic program. Instead, it requires a program of political restructuring and cultural conversion designed to strip away the densely knotted fabric of meanings, ideas, and discourses that clothe and shield the military-industrial coalition.

Similar strategic miscalculations have prompted observers to overestimate the importance of the enemy, or at least of the Soviet enemy, in the cold-war narrative. We have been misled by the inverted hubris of the declining Soviets themselves: "We will deprive you of the enemy," leading Soviet spokesperson Georgy Arbatov boasted several times last year. And, indeed, the Soviets' defection has weakened the position of the American armorers; but it is far from clear that the damage is irreparable. For most Americans, the cold war had already become, by the late 1980s, a kind of simulacrum for a global struggle whose existence outside the realms of rhetoric and imagination was ephemeral anyway. Cold-war discourse had moved away from defining moments of confrontation with the Soviets (the Berlin blockade, the Cuban missile crisis) and toward the focus on free-floating abstract terms such as "deterrence,"

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"stability," and "credibility." The discourse came to seem more like a surrealist text about the system of signs within the text rather than about any world outside it. Its self-referential nature and its penchant for simulation have brought the politics of the military-industrial complex into the postmodern age; and the postmodern character of the American cold-war narrative may enable it to survive the death of its villain in a way that would be difficult for a more "realist" narrative.

If the cold war has so far been outlived by the institutions it engendered—weapons laboratories, tank factories, think tanks—this is largely a matter of institutional inertia; but it is also partly because of the persistence of the cold-war narrative—the textual world within which the imaginary war was made real. This narrative, which continues to shape the worldview of many of our leaders, has only been "about" the United States and the Soviet Union in the sense that a soap opera is "about" its particular characters. The characters in the cold-war soap opera (among whom only the United States has been truly indispensable) have mattered not so much for themselves as for the themes they dramatize: the struggle to find stability and happiness in a world of danger, duplicity, and betrayal; a faith that prosperity and technology can solve our problems; the quest for meaning in suffering; and an imperfect but innocent hero whose mistakes are redeemed by the best of intentions. This drama, mixing great thematic richness with an ultimate vagueness, can easily adapt to new circumstances.

It would be easy to underestimate the continuing power of cold-war institutional culture by concentrating only on the feebler and more absurd examples of the military imagination in the post–cold-war world: for example, the recent suggestion by a nuclear submarine commander that we convert ballistic-missile submarines into "high-capacity-strike warfare platforms" for use against coca-processing plants in Latin America; or the idea that SDI lasers be developed to target swarms of African locusts; not to mention the nuclear scientist's proposal that the U.S. keep testing nuclear weapons as a means of simulating and researching earthquakes.

There are less eccentric suggestions. Recently, I have been doing ethnographic research at the Livermore Laboratory. My interview subjects—the Lab's senior managers and weapons scientists—are already hard at work devising new scenarios to revitalize old customs and refashioning the cold-war narrative. Social scientists have observed that privileged social groups maintain their ideological power by reappropriating and redefining key public terms—"freedom," "equality," and "stability," for example. By reworking the meanings of established sovereign words, they manage to stay ahead in the battle for position we call politics. "Stability" was one of the central words in cold-war discourse, and Livermore scientists are now reconstructing its meaning. A senior manager I interviewed at the Laboratory has already begun to make this conceptual leap:

> Right now we're going through probably a period of maximum uncertainty about the direction the Soviets will take, because the situation's, frankly, unstable. It's not clear Gorbachev will be there a year from now, or whether ... we may have ten countries each with substantial nuclear weapons capability.

In the 1980s, when the Soviet Union was a vigorous nuclear power, the term "instability" referred to the possibility that the Soviets might acquire numerical or technical superiority in nuclear weapons. It denoted asymmetry within the context of a binary rivalry. Now, the comparative weakness of the other side is perceived to be as threatening as its strength used to be. The context is changed, the term remains, but the meaning is different.

(Continued on p. 90)

PERSONAL ESSAY

Anne Franks in Texas

S. L. Wisenberg

Nazis came to Texas in the 1960s. We would hear them just around the corner. My older sister Rosi would make the sound of their footsteps—would tap her hand on the pink carpet of the walk-in closet in her room (just like the one in mine). She would look up and say, "Listen, do you hear them?" I would hold my breath. We were in the woods with the partisans. Though we didn't know the exact meaning of the word. We sat around our (invisible) campfire. We were hiding from the Nazis. They would take us away. We had saltines and olives to live on.

Sometimes I would be the one to tap tap tap slap my palms against the pink carpet: "Listen, do you hear them?" Nazis coming through the woods. They had been tipped off, perhaps by paid informers like the ones who had turned in Anne Frank.

I had read her diary. We had seen the end of the movie on TV though my mother had said, "Don't you think they should go to bed?" My father had said, "They have to learn." What we had to learn about was life. What had happened to the Jews crouched in silence. On TV we heard the big Nazi boot against the door of the Secret Annex where the Franks were hidden. The Nazis bashed in the door the way ours had never been bashed, or my father's, or my mother's. My father had fought the Nazis in the ocean. My mother had stayed home. She'd been a schoolgirl.

Once I asked her, "Have you ever had a raw potato?" I imagined her digging them from a field, getting through the war. She'd grown up in Dallas. She said, maybe once—when her brother's barbecue project in the backyard hadn't turned out. There was no starvation, there were no Nazis in Texas. No hiding with partisans. Nothing but two daughters in the sixties with saltines and green olives stuffed with pimentos and sometimes a strand or two of raw spaghetti on the side.

For years I kept a getaway bag in my closet, saltines and a notebook, a change of clothes. An alarm clock, so I would know the time. I liked the big friendly white and gold face of that alarm clock. One summer night the air conditioning didn't work and we opened the windows and I heard Nazis, scratching to get in to take me away and steal my glasses. In the morning my father claimed the noise had been mosquitoes, or june bugs. The same june bugs I would watch at nights on the porch. I would turn over the june bugs that had landed on their backs, skittering. I wanted to right all the june bugs.

We liked playing in the closet. We liked the thrill of hiding. We were victims but were never caught. Sometimes we played secretary instead. Sometimes we played that we were lizards on a ship hiding from the Nazis. The Nazis would take us to a concentration camp. They would take my glasses and asthma drugs and let death just come up and kill me like that. At Hebrew school the teachers talked about Nazis. They showed us a film on a small screen. They showed us the small bodies and the striped prison outfits. But we didn't think of it as prison. It was a camp and the Nazis took people there. Jews.

They didn't take *us* because we were quiet in the woods, we sprinkled sand and dirt over our fire in the closet in the woods before they were close enough to smell the smoke. The Nazis were stupid. They were thick and dumb like animals and wore big heavy boots up to their hips. We were good so the Nazis would never find us. We were smarter and darker than the Nazis. But we were bad, there was something bad about us or the Nazis wouldn't have been after us. We were bad hiding in the closet. We had sneaked the saltines and the olives from the pantry. We had wrapped them in foil. Nobody knew we were there. Mother knew we were playing. She didn't interfere.

When we played secretary, our office was out in the hall and we would hold papers up to the air vents that would suck them so they stuck. When we played school, the air vents along the wall held up the pretend tests we gave each other. Sometimes we would just play without having a name to it and slide on the terrazzo floor in our stocking feet.

Sometimes at dusk we played capture-the-flag with the neighbor kids in the Shelbys' front yard. There were brown rabbits in the field behind the house and once policemen came with horses back there on a search for something. A criminal hiding in the empty lot.

S. L. Wisenberg's story "The Sweetheart Is In" was published in Tikkun *in 1989. She was a 1990–1991 fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts.*

At some point we stopped playing Nazi. It wasn't my idea to start or stop. Maybe Rosi stopped playing with me, started playing with her own friends, and no more Nazis. We outgrew Nazis. When I was twenty-one I went to Amsterdam and alone I went to the Secret Annex. It was on the tourist map. Each room was small and there was a guest book to sign with a fancy gold pen, unattached to anything, no string or chain. There were the books Anne Frank had read while she was in hiding and movie-star pictures pinned to the wall. The place was small, it had no power, too many people walking through.

Ten years after that, a layover in the Amsterdam airport, a Greek man saw me borrow someone's tour book of the Anne Frank house. The Greek man said to his American wife: "Of course she's interested in Anne Frank—she's Jewish." The man who'd bought the book wasn't Jewish. I said nothing. The Greek could tell I was Jewish.

There is a statue of Anne Frank in front of a church in Amsterdam. In the walk-in closets in Houston now are full-length mirrors and the shelves each of us covered in our favorite pink contact paper, ruffles we tacked along the edges. The closets are shrines. In Rosi's closet are my mother's mink coat and the large bride doll too big to play with, and the felt board with felt numbers.

Where I live now, I don't sit in the closets. The closets are full. I'm on the third floor. No Nazis bang against my screens at night. Around the world people are defacing Jewish graves, threatening pogroms. In my neighborhood Jewish Community Center I watched a slide show of someone's trip to Europe—pictures of Auschwitz-Birkenau, rust-colored gas chamber. "It was cold," the traveler told us, "so very very cold. Everyone told us to bring our sweaters, even though it was a warm day." Ghosts breathing out cold air from having absorbed the force of someone else's hatred. About a hundred-seventy-five miles from the camp, the traveler had seen two young boys spray-paint on a memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto. She said, "There is hatred for Jews where there are not even Jews anymore."

Anne Frank was shipped from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Bergen-Belsen. I read about her all through my childhood. She never seemed like a child to me. At parties I eat olives and saltines. Alone at night shadows brush against my face. At the JCC, one slide showed words in a foreign language carved into a wall at the concentration camp. The traveler thought it said never to forget. In my late twenties when I felt sad, I would go to the public library and read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. It was warm and familiar. It would comfort me. □

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A Woman's Voice

Bonna Devora Haberman

"*Kol b'isha erva,*" says the Babylonian Talmud: The voice of a woman is lascivious, arousing, distracting. How can we understand and interpret this utterance socially and spiritually?

At the *kotel* (the Western Wall), Jewish women are today denied the right to open their mouths in the song of prayer and chant of Torah because of the prohibition against a man hearing a woman's voice. Surely this is not just a question of law, but a profound silencing of women in the public sphere. As a woman who has prayed all her life, who is committed to prayer, I feel connected to the words, metaphors, images, rhythms, melodies of the *siddur* (prayer book) as I continue to use and to question it. I choose to address *kol isha* through textual exegesis informed by life experience: the pain of silence.

Prayer has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. We express ourselves to and with our Creator; we speak and sing our praises, our requests and desires, our gratitude. Each of us has a singular meeting, a metaphoric place where we enter alone into the holiness of God's presence. This relationship is vertical. We also affirm—among one another, in each other's presence, and to one another—our faith and our belief. We enact a common experience. We give testimony as a community to God's being and to God's oneness. One of the sources of the concept of a prayer quorum is *eda,* from the root "testify." Indeed, only in the presence of a community can we utter the phrases of holiness, the kedusha, the kaddish, from the root q-d-sh: separate and holy. This is the horizontal plane of prayer: joining together with one another as a community.

Tractate Brachot asks what disables a man from concentrating sufficiently to utter the first sentence of the Sh'ma: *Sh'ma yisrael, ha'shem elokeinu, ha'shem echad,* Hear Israel, God is our God, God is One. This sentence is indeed *the* credo of our Judaism, the centerpiece of our prayer. It embodies both the horizontal and the vertical. We call on one another to affirm the Oneness of God.

A midrash places the Sh'ma's origins in the conversation between Jacob and his children before he gives them his deathbed blessing. Jacob, also known as Yisrael, questions his children's belief in and acceptance of God and the unity of the One. They respond to him: Sh'ma Yisrael, Hear Israel, God is our God, God is One. Sh'ma is set in a dialogue at the moment of ultimate recognition between the dying patriarch and the children of Israel. These are the words by which we have expressed our experience of God generation to generation, throughout our history. Saying Sh'ma, we simultaneously speak to each other, and to God, affirming our faith. These words, of all our prayers, are the ones which demand of us ultimate concentration, intent, focus. They embody *kavannah,* our fully conscious, passionate articulation of God's being.

In their inimitably unabashed style, the rabbis investigate the practical issues related to such a sublime spiritual subject. After all, we recite Sh'ma at night in bed. Two people with their buttocks touching, can they recite Sh'ma? Are young children naked in our presence a distraction? If not, from what age do they become a distraction? Is one pubic hair protruding through a man's garment a distraction? No, answers the text, these are not distractions. We are abruptly jolted back onto the original track: Sh'ma. If there is no stated prohibition, then there is no need to become ever more strict in our interpretation. We need not accept rulings indiscriminately, says the Gemara.

From this point the discussion in *Tractate Brachot* proceeds to a more general consideration of arousal by women. There comes the statement about a woman's voice, and one about her hair: Both are sexually inciting. Therefore, the Gemara interprets, hearing a woman's voice (singing, according to Rashi's interpretation) or seeing a woman's hair constitutes a distraction from the concentration to which one aspires when reciting Sh'ma.

This line of thinking, though, can be brought into a

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strange juxtaposition with the actual verses that the rabbis cite to corroborate their argument: In the Song of Songs, "let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, your appearance comely." Many read this as powerful and erotic poetry, a metaphor for love between the Jewish people and God. We are to each other beloved. We can conceive and understand the depth of our potential to know and love God through the experience of the longing and profound intimacy of lovers. In the Song of Songs, arousal is not a distraction. The opposite is the case. As our humanity is expressed through sensuous desire and love, so is our capacity to love God nurtured by this relationship. Rabbi Nachman of Bratislava speaks of seeking God out in the hiding places, revealing the *nistar,* the hidden. As a repository of the hidden, the woman in her relationship with a man is a conduit for the vertical relationship with God, not a distraction.

As a repository of the hidden, the woman in her relationship with a man is a conduit for the vertical relationship with God.

In contrast to the writings of the rabbis in the text of *Brachot,* I assert that the Song of Songs teaches us to weave together the vertical dimension of our prayer with the horizontal. Our relationship with God, claims the love poet, can be enriched and deepened by our human relationships. So also can our human relationships be influenced by our relationship with God. We can come to accept and value our humanity in such a way that we allow ourselves to experience God also among us, not only in a vertical dimension. Jewish love and friendship, community and peoplehood must express holiness. Part of this holiness is the integrity of our voices, of our songs, of our bodies. God created us as human beings, man *and woman* together; our bodies and our souls are in God's image. We need not fear being human before God.

I glean from the Song of Songs, in contrast to the text of *Brachot,* a view of our relationships as one tightly woven tapestry, the vertical and horizontal merging and supporting one another as the warp and the woof. If we build our relations by accepting our carnality, accustom ourselves to being fully human in each other's presence, imbuing our love with holiness, then we will not be frightened. Our holiness will spill over into our relationship with God and vice versa.

The issue of the voice of a woman arises only when a woman is in the presence of a man or men. On her own, and in the company of other women, a woman's voice does not distract; it has the same claim to God's ear, God's compassion. So *kol isha* is a matter of the relationships among men and women at the moment when one is concentrating on directing a prayer to God. It points to where the vertical and the horizontal planes intersect.

With this exegesis in hand, return to the original text. The Gemara assumes that it is a man who recites Sh'ma. A man stands to be distracted. There is a long discussion in the Gemara in *Brachot* about the requirement for kavanah (intention) in all the prayers. The rabbis conclude that they can demand full concentration only for the first statement of Sh'ma, not for the biblical verses, not for the *amidah* (the standing prayer), not for the blessings. At that moment of reciting Sh'ma, the man is meant to summon his power of concentration to the fullest extent possible. Yet, the rabbis believe, even when he is at this peak moment of intention, he is utterly weak and vulnerable, susceptible to distraction by a woman.

In the halachic literature, the issue of *kol isha* took two main paths. In the *Shulchan Aruch* (the laws concerned with reciting Sh'ma), a man is directed to take care not to hear the singing voice of a woman at the moment he recites the first verse. However, in the laws of personal behavior, men are generally cautioned to stay far from women in order to avoid sexual offenses. Here *kol isha* is again cited. The legalists took advantage of the opening in the Gemara, the possibility of generalizing from the specific case to a conception of the insurmountable power of a woman to seduce.

Not only is this an unacceptable attitude toward women, it is a tremendous underestimation of men's ability to concentrate. It is also a testimony to the culture- and time-bound nature of halachic attitudes, and to what extent they function on the basis of uncontested assumptions in an all-male universe of discourse. In place of the fear and distrust of women, let us consciously construct a horizontal context for our prayers, conducive to intentionality. Rather than aspiring to transcend the human, the sensuous, to distance ourselves from it, let us acknowledge it and become familiar and comfortable with it. One important correction we bring to the *Brachot* is that *women recite Sh'ma,* not only men. The metaphor of lovers is so fitting. In the wedding blessings we sing: "Soon will be heard in the cities of Judah and in Jerusalem a voice of joy, of happiness, of groom, and of bride." Let both voices be heard. So also do children recite Sh'ma. In the evening transition from day to night, the unsettling moments of entering the unknown darkness of our experience, we affirm together. Not only do we affirm our belief in God, we also affirm our belief in one another. We affirm the holiness of our relationships because God is our God. Sh'ma Yisrael. □

Much Ado About Something: The *Tikkun* Conference in Israel

From June 23 to June 28, more than 700 people attended the Tikkun *Israel Conference held at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. In classes, small group strategy sessions, panel discussions, and plenary speeches, conference participants explored issues ranging from "What liberatory possibilities exist for social-change movements in the West?" to "Joint Israel-Diaspora Peace Strategies" to "Coping with Jewish Fears—Rational and Irrational."*

In our report from the conference, we first share some reflections on our experience of the conference and its aftermath. Then we present some excerpts from a few of the 87 speakers at the event.

We ourselves may not have been fully prepared for quite how politically explosive the issues the conference raised would become. We now know that until these issues are dealt with, the peace movement is likely to face severe problems. It is out of a strong commitment to the well-being of the Israeli peace forces that we are continuing this discussion in the pages of Tikkun.

★ ★ ★

Reflections on the Tikkun Israel Conference by the Tikkun Staff

The recent *Tikkun* conference in Israel was originally conceived as a show of solidarity with the Israeli peace movement; but it soon became apparent that more than a mere display of support was required. For when *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner and other organizers arrived in Israel in the spring, they found a peace movement deeply dispirited by the Gulf War, struggling to achieve anything more than meager turn-outs at meetings and demonstrations, and clearly lacking a long-term political strategy likely to win them power. After numerous consultations with activists from the various peace and social-change organizations, we decided to focus the conference on the malaise facing the Israeli peace movement.

The problem was striking. On the one hand, polls continued to reveal a growth in support for the peace movement's position of territorial compromise. On the other hand, the polls also indicated a *decrease* in political support for the parties identified with the peace position, a decrease that would further diminish theirpower to bring about the changes they wanted to achieve.

There was a compelling reason for us to explore these issues. Many people in the peace movement have been saying to us privately for the past year that they hope for some strong external pressure on Israel as the *only* way that the political situation might change there. Many have suggested that cuts in aid or linkage of aid to progress in the peace process is an important step. But for us at *Tikkun,* who have never called for any cuts in aid to Israel, going in that direction would involve profound political risks. When we supported a demilitarized Palestinian state, we could point to important elements of the peace movement who would join us in that position. If we were to touch the aid question, however, we would need even stronger support from Israeli activists. Yet Israeli peace people were telling us they wanted us to advocate the cuts, while they themselves were unwilling to say that they supported this position in public. They explained to us that advocating cuts or linkage would be politically damaging—and that American activists should take the political risk of publicly arguing that the only effective pressure that the U.S. could bring to bear on Israel would be economic pressure.

This, of course, put us in a difficult position. So it seemed legitimate to ask whether it was really true that the *only* way to change Israeli policy was via external pressure. Is it true that the peace movement had done all it could to reach Israelis and bring them into the peace

camp? Were there strategies that ought to be tried and constituencies that could be won if the peace movement tried a different tack?

We knew that we didn't have the answers to these questions. We came not to preach, but to learn. But we did know the questions that needed to be asked.

Unfortunately, the moment we began to ask these questions, we provoked a great deal of controversy. On the one hand, many Israelis of Sephardi or Mizrachi extraction (who today are referred to as Oriental Jews, namely those who came to Israel from Islamic countries in the 1950s and 1960s) began to tell us that their interests and issues had not been adequately addressed. Their position is represented in the extracts below from Shlomo Elbaz and Yossi Yonah. On the other hand, many of the leaders of the peace movement felt threatened by our raising these issues. Indeed, some of these leaders began to ask what right we had to raise these questions at all. We pointed out that of the 87 speakers at the conference, 79 of them were Israelis, and that it was not we who were answering the questions. Still, some of these leaders simply avoided the conference, or overtly attacked it on the grounds that these Americans couldn't possibly have the solutions to Israeli problems. In framing the issue this way, they may have hoped to avoid discussing the actual problems we were raising, to sidestep dealing with the content of the issues.

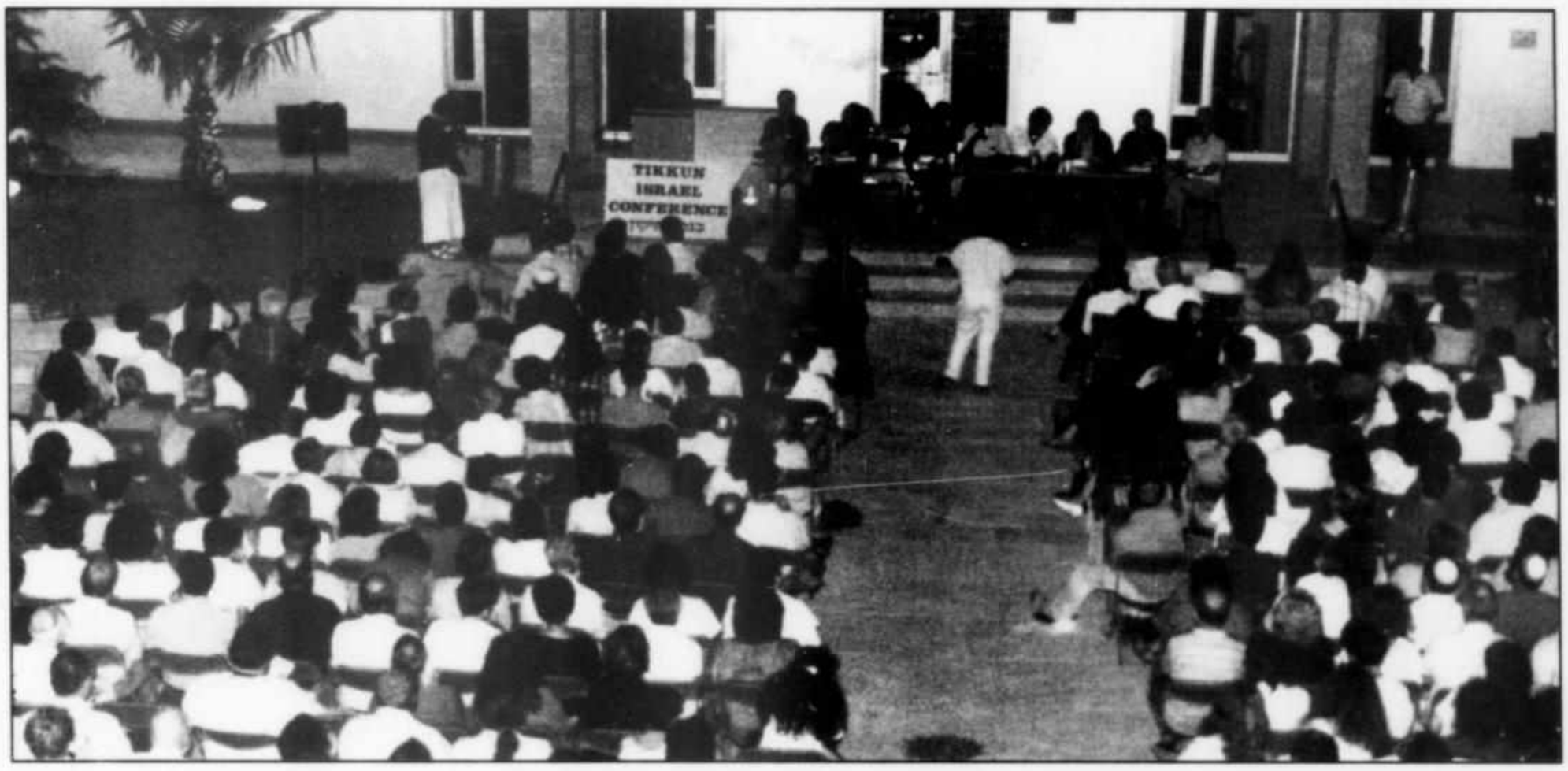
Here, a word of compassion for the peace movement leadership. Leaders of the Israeli peace movement have been working tirelessly for years, often with little enough support from the people who really agree with them but are not always willing to take the same risks, sometimes burdened down by doubts about whether their own sacrifices have really been worth it, and dispirited by the continuing failure of the Palestinians to act in ways that would help reassure the Israeli population that peace could really work. It was perhaps to be expected that leaders of the peace movement would not necessarily want to hear much about why their approaches weren't working. But the Israelis who made up our organizing committee insisted that while the peace-movement leadership might resist being involved in this kind of a discussion, the actual mass base of the peace movement would really welcome such a change in direction. Many of the Israeli organizers insisted that a serious discussion of long-term strategy was not on the agenda of the peace movement, and that far from causing problems, it would be precisely this kind of dialogue that would energize people, reawaken their interest, and help them overcome some of the apathy and despair that has stalled the peace movement's progress. We were particularly encouraged in these discussions by the strong interest of some of the Labor doves and some of the activists in MAPAM and the kibbutz movement. Mizrachi activists, in particular, insisted that if we were willing to persist in having the conference deal with these sensitive issues, we would generate considerable interest.



(From left): Tsvia Greenfield, Einat Ramon, Shlomo Desben, Deborah Weissman, and Arthur Waskow at a conference panel on the attitudes of the peace movement toward Judaism and the Jewish national experience.

So we persisted. And to our surprise, we produced the largest peace conference in Israel since the beginning of the intifada. In a political scene so jaded we were told we should count an attendance of more than 50 Israelis a success, more than 500 Israelis took time off work and paid to attend. They were joined by more than 200 others from America and around the world. The 87 speakers included Uriel Simon, Avi Ravitsky, Yaron Ezrahi, and Yishayahu Leibowitz; Palestinian activists MK Hashem Machmid, Salim Tamaris, Dr. Hieder Abdul Shafi, and Zakira Kamal; feminists Leah Shakdiel, Masha Lubelsky, Ruth Cohen, Galit Chazan-Rokem, Naomi Chazan, and Alice Shalvi; Knesset members Yair Tzaban, Dedi Zucker, Uzi Baram, Charlie Biton, Yossi Sarid, Moshe Shachal, and Shulamith Aloni; and U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone. (Wellstone's presence was one measure of the importance of the conference; it represented the first time a U.S. senator had chosen to come to Jerusalem to identify with the peace movement.)

Describing the multilayered experience of the conference is a difficult task: The questions asked were so complex and painful, the answers often so challenging to conventional political wisdom. There were moments of transcendent hope and joy, when speakers and audiences were caught up in the excitement of sharing complex and subtle truths (as when Sidra Ezrahi, Benny Morris, and others analyzed the way Jewish history has been conceived as a story designed to increase Jewish fears; or when *Tikkun* contributor Gary Peller and Israeli lawyer Avigdor Feldman explored the limits of



Some of the 700-plus conference participants attend the evening plenary on why the Left has not been more successful.

the fight for human rights). There were other moments of almost agonizing tension, for example when Palestinians dodged Michael Lerner's attempts to get them to say clearly that they would accept a demilitarized Palestinian state and that they accepted not only the fact of Israel's existence but also its *right* to exist—reassurances that would have made it easier to convince other Israelis that a Palestinian state would not be a security threat. And there were times of rough political debate, as in the plenary session where Mizrachi complaints were first aired and the direction of the peace movement was strongly challenged.

Certain achievements made us particularly proud. This was the first general-orientation peace conference that had given serious attention to integrating women speakers into every session and explicitly exploring the links between feminism and peace. And this was the first peace conference to attempt to integrate Judaism and the Jewish national experience into the actual structure of the event, by dedicating each morning to formal study of religious issues and their relationship to social change. Michael Walzer taught on Jewish political philosophy; Leah Shakdiel on feminism and Judaism; Moshe Idel on Jewish mysticism; Hillel Levine on the relationship between Jew and non-Jew. Peter Gabel and Gary Peller provided a secular alternative on the future of social-change movements.

Although the conference aimed to popularize the notion that the peace movement needs a long-term strategy, many activists felt that it would be premature to use this gathering to formally adopt a particular strategy. The "Incentives for Peace Plan" put forth by Michael Lerner seemed to generate the greatest interest both among conference attendees and in the Israeli press. Instead of advocating cuts in existing aid or linkage of existing aid to progress in the peace process, Lerner proposed that the United States offer a kind of Marshall Plan for the Middle East once peace has been achieved between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. A central element would be a massive increase in aid to Israel—but this aid would *first* require the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state. This aid increase, desperately needed to settle Ethiopian and Russian *olim*, has the potential to break the deadlock in Israeli politics by permitting the Left to argue the economic benefits of trading land for peace, thus putting a majority electoral victory within the peace camp's grasp. An incentives plan also avoids the possible backlash that aid cuts might precipitate: Israelis might become more attached to the Right when faced with economic threats from the U.S.—particularly when the threats are not massive enough to seriously weaken the Israeli economy. And such incentives have a positive role to play that makes it possible for liberal American Jews to show that their program will be in Israel's interests, making them seem to want to hurt Israel as punishment for its "transgressions" against the rights of Palestinians.

Overall, the conference produced a sense of excitement that prevailed throughout the four and a half days of deliberation from June 23 to June 27. We weren't voting on resolutions or making concrete decisions. But we were doing something equally important: We were

creating an intellectual framework for the deliberations and strategy debates of the future. And we were touching the taboo subjects—e.g., the way the peace movement often comes off as hostile to Judaism and the Jewish national experience, or the way that Sephardim and Mizrachim view the peace movement as indifferent to their concerns. No one who actually attended the entire conference could doubt that something significant was happening.

The significance of the event was not lost on the Right either—as we saw in the vicious attacks on Michael Lerner and the conference that appeared in the right-wing Israeli press. Quotes from Lerner's days as a student activist in the 1960s were mixed with personal attacks on his integrity and idealism to paint a picture of an evil person who had come to Israel to manipulate the poor defenseless natives. By focusing on Lerner and hoping to isolate and denigrate him as a human being, these accounts sought to deflect any substantive engagement with the ideas of the conference. And once again we heard a chorus of people objecting that "Americans have no right to comment on Israeli governmental policy." (Ironically, this argument, long decried by the Israeli Left when the external criticism applied only to Shamir, was raised by several disgruntled leftists as well.)

The right-wing attacks focused on the actions of a member of a group called Victims of Arab Terror, who went to the police the last day of the conference and filed charges against Michael Lerner for sedition—based on the allegation that Lerner had called upon Israelis to refuse army service in the West Bank and Gaza. Anyone in Israel can file a charge against anyone else, so the police dutifully took the charges but were not interested enough to investigate. Although they may not have known that Lerner did not advocate refusal to serve, they did know that many Israelis have advocated this same position.

What Lerner had done was issue a paper that outlined four different and explicitly opposed strategies. He had written the paper in order to illustrate how participants could think about long-term strategies and how a strategy differs from a short-term reaction to a particular, immediate situation. One of the four strategies Lerner outlined concerned civil disobedience; and in assessing that strategy, Lerner simply acknowledged that people were already refusing service in the West Bank, and described how those engaged in this activity could be more effective. Instead of refusing one by one, those who refused service could instead circulate a statement that said that *if* the Occupation were still continuing two years from the time that they signed this paper and *if* ten thousand other people had also signed this same statement by that time, then the individuals who had signed would announce that they would not serve in the Occupied Territories.

Lerner himself does not agree with this strategy—he accepts the argument of many Israelis that if someday they are going to ask the Army to carry out a withdrawal from the West Bank that right-wingers will disagree with, they ought now to carry out orders to serve in the West Bank that they currently disagree with (though with careful attention not to engage in acts that violate their own conscience or internationally guaranteed human rights). But since the strategy paper was never discussed at the conference, Lerner never had an opportunity to explain why he disagrees with this particular strategy.

The incident was dramatized by the *Jerusalem Post,* and subsequently throughout the Western press. Formerly a centrist Labor party daily, the *Post* had recently been acquired by right-wingers who have now turned it into a leading voice of reaction. The *Post* story was picked up by the Associated Press, which released it in the U.S. while withholding from the American wires a more favorable story that had been filed by its Jerusalem AP office earlier in the week. While the Hebrew-language press entirely ignored this non-story, aware of the trivial nature of the original police complaint, the American press was suddenly filled with the story of an American magazine editor being charged with sedition.

Without bothering to check whether the alleged seditious statements had ever been uttered, Hirsch Goodman, perhaps sensing that an attack on *Tikkun* would be a good way to sell his new magazine, the *Jerusalem Report,* as an alternative to the *Jerusalem Post,* published a vicious attack on Lerner entitled "Michael Lerner for Breakfast." Goodman, in the sloppiest tradition of yellow journalism, repeated that Lerner had urged Israelis not to serve on the West Bank, and then proceeded to denounce the entire conference as the work of American Jews who should not interfere with Israeli affairs.

Goodman's piece uses the most extreme hyperbole. "The man [Lerner] is a disgrace not only to the Jewish people. He has given the cause of decency a bad name." All this for putting forth the question of how others might choose not to serve in the army? Attacking Lerner together with Jerry Segal of the Jewish Peace Lobby, Goodman says that they "have made a profession out of other people's problems." (Other people? Is the fate of the Jewish people "other people's problems"?) And finally, the real criterion of whether one has a right to criticize: "Who is he to come along and tell us how to make peace or war? Has he ever had to kill a man for

the Jewish state? Has he ever had to commit children to the army?" Well, no, Lerner hasn't killed anyone for the Jewish state—but we don't see that this should be viewed as a reasonable criterion for having a right to criticize its policies, or to suggest strategies for the Israeli peace movement. And, yes, Lerner's son is planning to go into the Israeli army in another two years—in part because of the pro-Zionist upbringing he received from his father.

Other press attacks followed in the wake of Goodman's and the *Post*'s, and by the time we on the *Tikkun* staff had returned to the U.S., we were embroiled in a struggle to convince our American supporters that the conference was about something other than organizing people not to serve in the West Bank—and indeed that the gathering wasn't about non-service at all.

The task was made more complicated by the publication in the *Jerusalem Post* of yet another attack, this time by Menachem Rosensaft, a certifiable Jewish liberal. Rosensaft had been one of the group sponsored by the International Center for Peace in the Middle East who met with Yassir Arafat in Stockholm. He had himself been pilloried for this act and for his somewhat overly credulous attitude toward Arafat. Rosensaft is reported to have become disillusioned with the PLO after the attempted Tel Aviv beach attack in May, 1990. Having lost credibility in the Jewish community, Rosensaft may have reasoned that an attack on Michael Lerner would reestablish his standing with the right-wingers who continue to dominate American Jewish organizational life. In an article entitled "Criticism Yes, Sedition No," Rosensaft boldly asserted that Lerner "publicly called on Israeli soldiers to refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories." The image is of Lerner addressing an audience of soldiers and calling on them to refuse service, rather than what really happened: Lerner wrote a paper that was not even discussed at the conference, and that consulted those who were pursuing the strategy of non-service on how to accomplish aims that they had already established for themselves.

"Unlike Lerner," Rosensaft goes on in valiant self-promotion, "I would not want to see Israel replaced by anarchy or by a militarized, PLO-dominated Palestinian state." Every time Michael Lerner has ever spoken or written about a Palestinian state it has been with the clear emphasis on demilitarization; yet Rosensaft has no compunction about straightforwardly lying about Lerner's position. In fact, those who attended the Israel conference watched Lerner confront a panel of Palestinian speakers and insist that they help the peace movement provide reassurances to the Israeli public by agreeing with Lerner's call for demilitarization as an inherent part of any future Palestinian state. But the truth seems to matter little when people are determined to slander the *Tikkun* enterprise.

"Regardless of what he says," Rosensaft goes on, "Lerner is not a friend of Israel." Seeking perhaps to finally rid himself of the scorn heaped upon him for his meeting with Arafat, Rosensaft even calls Lerner an "Arafat groupie," though Lerner has never met with Arafat and never praised him. Rosensaft concludes that "Michael Lerner and his ilk . . . are an obstacle to peace."

In the month after the conference, both the *Jerusalem Report* and the *Jerusalem Post* refused to give us space to respond to the charges that had been leveled.

These kinds of attacks are likely to increase as the Baker peace conference convenes and the Israeli government proceeds to reject any exchange of land for peace. *Tikkun* will be in the forefront of those liberal Jews who argue that Israel's long-term interests and the moral traditions of the Jewish people will best be served by granting the Palestinians the same rights to national self-determination that the Jewish people rightly claims for itself. So we will be critical of proceedings that have not allowed the Palestinian people to pick their own representatives and that do not acknowledge their need for sovereignty within some part of the West Bank and Gaza (though we will continue to insist that this sovereignty must be exercised in ways consistent with Israeli security). And almost inevitably, those who are hostile to our criticisms will try to marginalize us by circulating the kinds of reckless charges that were spread after the Jerusalem conference. Ironically, the Hebrew press provided zero coverage of these charges and zero coverage of the way these attacks were circulated in the U.S.—so that many Israeli peaceniks have no idea of the actual political price that we are paying for having organized the Jerusalem conference.

We continue to receive extremely enthusiastic communications from Israelis who attended the conference. The excitement it generated, and the deep and perplexing questions it raised, will remain part of its legacy. Although the political problems facing the peace movement may be temporarily obscured by the Baker conference, they will regain center-stage once it becomes clear that the international peace conference cannot solve these problems as long as the Israeli government opposes exchanges of land for peace. Unless the issues raised at the Jerusalem conference are addressed, we are likely to see the peace-oriented parties losing ground in Israeli elections that may take place within the next year. We have excerpted parts of a few of the sessions of the conference to give a fuller sense of the dialogue that took place there. □

Excerpts From the Conference

Space limitations preclude a full transcript of the major sessions at the conference, so we've selected excerpts from a few of the significant presentations. We regret not being able to give a fuller selection of the conference speakers, but we hope this gives you some of the flavor of what made the conference both exciting and explosive. (Hebrew translations by Tony Frank)

A roundtable discussion with Shlomo Elbaz, professor of literature at Hebrew University and chair of East for Peace (the Sephardi/Mizrachi peace organization); Danielle Melloul, an activist in East for Peace; and Yossi Yonah, assistant professor of philosophy at Hebrew University.

Shlomo Elbaz: The history of our relations with the peace camp, and particularly with Peace Now, has been very sad. Even though Peace Now did not address the social-justice issue, we tried to work within the group—until the night that Emil Gruzweig was murdered following an angry confrontation between peace demonstrators and a primarily Mizrachi counterdemonstration. The press portrayed the murder as though the entire Oriental population were responsible, and many of the pro–Peace Now columnists talked in racist terms. The Orientals were being portrayed as *the* obstacle to peace, so we set up East for Peace to show that many Mizrachim support peace. We hoped that this framework would draw Orientals to the peace camp. We knew that our people could not identify with the existing peace camp because they identified it with the people responsible for the problems during the fifties, when Mizrachim first came to Israel and were treated disrespectfully and discriminated against.

Tikkun: How did the peace camp respond to the creation of East for Peace?

Elbaz: Some of them were happy that we were organizing, but they wanted us to work within Peace Now without any independent identity. We tried to explain to them that we would be happy to be part of Peace Now, but only if Peace Now would recognize the centrality of two other issues: social justice and cultural integration into the Middle East.

Poverty, housing, and the erosion of standards of living among Mizrachi Jews are the key social-justice issues that a peace movement must care about if it is going to reach Oriental Jews, who constitute a majority of the Israeli population. Peace Now leaders told us that they understood that social justice is important, but they were unwilling to integrate this concern into a central place in their political program, they said, because a peace camp would be more effective if it were single-issue in its focus.

Cultural integration is an even harder issue for Peace Now. We tried to explain to them that our conflict with our neighbors is not strictly political or territorial; it is also a clash between Western and Eastern (or Mediterranean) cultures. The majority of our politicians and opinion makers are convinced that the vocation of Israel is to be an outpost of Western civilization in the immense, backward, medieval Eastern world. But many progressive Mizrachim believe that Jews should be thought of as an Eastern people, a people who had been in exile all over the world but was now returning to its birthplace in the East. Israelis must identify with the East and acknowledge that Eastern civilization is not inferior to any other civilization.

Of course we aren't trying to take Israel back to the Middle Ages; we want Israel to be modern and democratic, and to develop science and technology. But we want to adopt some of what is best in the Eastern philosophies of life and some of what can be learned from the languages and cultures of this area. For example, in the West, time is money; for the Oriental, time allows for contact with one's existential situation. Oriental Jews do not have the notion that every moment must be "useful." Eastern culture emphasizes being in accord with others, living outside with others, and places less emphasis on individual interests, selfishness, and privacy. Alienation is the result of Western individualism—and we do not need that here. So if Israel is going to live in peace with its neighbors, we are going to have to become a more Eastern country. And Mizrachim could play a decisive role in making this adjustment to our Eastern cultural environment.

Danielle Melloul: When we first came to Israel in the fifties and sixties, Mizrachi culture was rejected and portrayed as inferior. And now the dominant culture in

Israel does the same thing to the whole Middle East. We can no longer deny that we are physically part of the Middle East; we should seek to be culturally part of it.

ELBAZ: This was the hardest thing for Peace Now to accept or consider valid, because they consider themselves part of the West and want to play the role of people from outside who have come to civilize the poor, backward people who live in this area. Those of us who came from Morocco know about the colonialist approach from France, and now we see it repeated here. If we want to live in peace here we have to get rid of the attitude of superior people coming to help the inferior natives. We have to learn their language and their culture and open a dialogue with them. By trying to rehabilitate Eastern ways and values, we would rehabilitate the cultural identity and worth of Oriental Jews.

Peace Now was happy to have us as members and participants at their demonstrations—but they would not allow us to speak. The speakers were all white—all Ashkenazim—and when we pushed our way in and insisted on Mizrachi speakers and spokespeople, the Peace Now leadership resisted completely. They didn't understand that for the sake of peace, they ought to be giving the Mizrachim more importance, even out of proportion to the number of Mizrachim who were joining the demonstrations. If they had done that, they would have attracted more Mizrachim and made it easier for Mizrachim to identify with the peace movement.

MELLOUL: The Mizrachim are not ideologically committed Jabotinsky rightists. Their commitment to Likud is mostly based on anger at what the Labor party did to them, not so much on anger at the Arabs. And because it is not ideologically based, it can be changed. But as long as people like Rabin and Peres are still around, Mizrachi people feel that these are the same people who neglected their problems in the past.

YOSSI YONAH: Both ideologically and practically, I find it hard to work in the Peace Now framework, which addresses the issue of peace, but ignores the pressing social-justice issue. Ideologically, I don't see how one can fight for Palestinian self-determination while neglecting the right to self-realization of poor people who happen to be your neighbors. A common criticism of peace activists is that they are more concerned about the well-being of Palestinians than that of their brethren, the very people whom they want to support them.

Now they've hired a very good person, Roni Kaufman, whose job is to reach out into the [poor] neighborhoods to arrange meetings between Peace Now leaders and the people there.

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ELBAZ: But there's no change in anything fundamental. They are still not changing their leadership, and they still refuse to raise the social-justice issue.

YONAH: They sometimes draw attention to the fact that money spent on the West Bank would be available for social programs if there were no settlements. But they miss the central conceptual issue: justice, the pain and misery faced by many Sephardim and Mizrachim. The moral stand that the peace movement should be taking is that we care about the value of human beings and want to alleviate their suffering. That would mean caring *both* about the lives of Palestinians and about the lives of the many poor Mizrachim. Right now, the peace movement mentions poverty only as a means to get votes—but it is obvious that they don't really care about the economic oppression. Of course the Mizrachim understand this, and hence find it very hard to respond to the concerns of the peace movement.

Yael Dayan says "the peace camp is a single-issue camp" and if you are looking for social justice, go to the parties that have social justice on their agenda. She doesn't see the conceptual link nor does she see the practical link. That allows the peace camp to be portrayed as more concerned about Palestinians than about their fellow Jews.

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ELBAZ: They aren't really concerned about Palestinians either. What they are concerned with is to achieve peace so that they can continue to enjoy the good life.

YONAH: Suppose that peace is achieved. It's not inconceivable to me that the Likud would become the progressive party on social issues. The Mizrachim who vote for the Likud may be right to think that they have more chance of getting social justice from the Likud than from the Labor party.

The Labor party is the party of the Israeli bourgeois. Together with the Shinui and RATZ [Citizen's Rights movement] parties, it represents the upper strata of Israeli society: the owners of capital, professionals, academics, the white-collar elite. In the Likud, on the other hand, we see the emergence of young Oriental leaders who come from underdeveloped "development towns" and distressed urban neighborhoods. I anticipate that there will be a struggle between these leaders and the "young princes" who represent the Jabotinsky legacy of the Israeli bourgeoisie, and who are today the leaders of Likud.

On the other hand, the Labor party, which is officially committed to progressive policies, is actually in turmoil on these questions—because its base is no longer really passionate about social-justice issues; these concerns don't follow from their own situation. Even in the Histadrut [the large, Labor party–dominated union], many people are caught up in capitalist thought and are attracted to the "free market" rhetoric that has become popular in the West.

It's no surprise that these people should feel particularly threatened by the *Tikkun* conference in Israel. The very fact that Michael Lerner has publicly suggested that the peace camp take the social-justice issue more seriously makes him a threat to the current leadership of the peace movement, and I would not be surprised if in order to detract from the credibility of his critique they attempt to discredit him personally, or even *Tikkun* magazine itself.

ELBAZ: Also, our raising the issue of the way the Left is perceived as hostile to Judaism and indifferent to the Jewish national experience is unacceptable to them.

YONAH: Yes, the *Tikkun* conference has touched a very sensitive nerve. The leadership of the peace movement knows that they are blameworthy for their attitudes toward Orientals and social justice. If it were not this way, there would be no reason for virulent personal attacks on Lerner. But he touched something very sensitive, something about which they feel guilty, and since they can't deal constructively with their guilt, they make attacks on the person who is raising these issues publicly.

ELBAZ: And they are not willing to pay the price to rectify the problem.

YONAH: To fight for Palestinian rights is easy for them, because if they win, granting these rights will not change the structure of Israeli society. But to address the issues we are raising in the *Tikkun* conference about social justice is a whole different story. Social justice means offering economic concessions to the poor—and that means that others have to give up something, give up some of the leadership of the peace movement and give up some of the privileges. From their perspective, they'd have to give another half-million children the chance to compete with their own children for the prestigious jobs—and that is not easy. So they'd rather continue to alienate potential supporters in the Mizrachi world and in the U.S.—and this will be counterproductive to their desire for peace—than give up any of their privilege. This is why they suddenly become allies with the Right: They are afraid that the agenda set by the *Tikkun* conference will subvert their power. But the fact that they are holding onto their power tenaciously actually undermines the possibility for peace.

TIKKUN: Let us present the critique we've heard from Peace Now about the role of peace-oriented Mizrachim organized in East for Peace. They ask the following: "If Peace Now is such a problem, why don't the Mizrachim simply ignore us and go out and organize other

Mizrachim? Who's stopping them? If their analysis is right, they should be recruiting a very large number of Mizrachim to their side. But they are not."

Elbaz: There are two reasons we have not been more successful. First, we have been discredited by the Left-dominated media. In Israel, the print media is heavily influenced by the Peace Now circles and those who identify with that way of looking at the world. Put yourself in the position of someone who wants to go out and organize in the Sephardi or Mizrachi world. To become known, even in our own communities, we have to be quoted, talked about, and referred to in the media [before] Mizrachim can even know there is a group that is pro-peace, and pro–social justice, and sensitive to the issues of the Mizrachi world. But the lefties in the media don't want to publicize this position, because it criticizes *them,* their privileges, and their way of being left-wing and pro-peace. Similarly, the Left doesn't want to give us prominence in or access to the machinery of the struggle for peace. They want us there, but as anonymous participants, incognito. They want a monopoly on the peace struggle. We don't have the people-power to go door-to-door and organize; we need to have some initial visibility, but the avenues to visibility are blocked.

Second, the people whom we want to organize are suspicious of us because they associate us with the Left. They immediately assume that we are pro-PLO and other things they associate with the Left. It would be one thing if we could come to them and say, "Look, the Left has changed. It now has major leaders and spokespeople who are Sephardim and Mizrachim; it now has adopted the struggle for social justice as a major focus; it now has renounced its cultural and intellectual chauvinism." But we can't say any of this, because we still feel put down and shut out by Peace Now. So we understand the hostility to the Left in our community—and the Left has given us no ammunition with which to counter that hostility.

There's a third, practical reason: We simply don't have the money to hire staff, print leaflets, etc. We can't collect it from the people we are trying to reach, since they are often very poor. For five years we got modest help from the New Israel Fund, but that was seed money and it stopped two years ago. If we don't find donors, the only way we can move forward is to coalesce with other peace forces.

We know that not all Ashkenazim are antagonistic to our goals. The *Tikkun* conference is proof of that. The violence of the critiques against the conference and against Michael Lerner are in direct proportion to the importance of the issues the conference raised. The huge amount of publicity around the conference was a sign of success—for the first time, much ado about something. It was a small revolution in the history of ideas here in Israel. You at *Tikkun* exposed the whole system of prejudices—and that makes the conference a monumental success already. □

Plenary: Strategies for the peace and social-justice movements. How can these movements go beyond "having good ideas" and actually win the power to implement them?

A.B. Yehoshua

A.B. Yehoshua, author, novelist, and playwright, is professor of comparative literature at Haifa University. His latest book, Mr. Mani, *will be published in February.*

The topic of this conference is "What happened to the peace movements that have good ideas but no audience?" Before we get into speeches of despair and self-flagellation, of self-anger and criticism, we should first look at the positive side.

After the 1967 war, the "dovish doctrine" was created in 1968–1969 by the group Shalom V'Bitachon (Peace and Security) and Lova Eliav's book introduced seven major theses, which in the last twenty-three years have been proven to be entirely true.

The first thesis said that the Arab–Israeli conflict is not eternal and is not metaphysical. It is a national conflict between peoples that can be solved. It will be solved, first of all, when the Arabs—not out of love for the Jews and not out of love for Israel, but out of necessity and because they can no longer pay the price of war—will recognize the State of Israel and make peace with it. This basic view has been proven to be entirely correct, not just in reference to the peace with Egypt, but also in the Palestinian position that has been evolving since 1988 when the Palestinians recognized the State of Israel. So the nonmetaphysical view of the conflict has been proven to be true.

The second view that was stated back in the late sixties is that the heart of the conflict is the Palestinian problem. There is a Palestinian nation that describes itself as such, and we cannot define it. The conflict does not just involve the Arab states, as people have tried to tell us. It began with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict 100 years ago and it is now returning to the source of the conflict. The "Palestinian people" does not just include the residents of the Territories. It also includes those who are outside the Territories. It is absolutely impossible to separate these two parts, in the same way that it is impossible to separate the Jew who lives here and the Jew who lives in Russia or Argentina. There is no way a

solution can be found that isolates the residents of the Territories and that says "only with them can we find a solution," without the solution being acceptable to the entire Palestinian people.

The only principle that works for peace is "territories for peace." This worked, to the last millimeter, in the agreement with Egypt. The peace with Egypt and its basic stability proves how healthy and moderate this principle is.

Another principle of the dovish doctrine is that unilateral "facts on the ground" will not establish legitimacy. Many people in the Labor party said, back in 1967–1969, "We will establish settlements and the world will get used to them." This was the essential view of the Labor party and, of course, of others. It became apparent that unilateral facts on the ground do not attain legitimacy. This was true of the Berlin Wall and of the annexation of Lithuania.

Another thesis is that without peace, there will be war. There is no middle ground of no-war and no-peace. The vacuum of no-peace leads to war. That was the case in the Yom Kippur War, in the Lebanon War, and that was the warning signal of the Gulf War.

During the last twenty-three years there has been a very significant and important shift. We speak about ourselves as the poor, isolated minority in the Israeli public, but this is not true. If you knew the views of the majority of the people leading the Labor party in the mid-seventies, they have radically changed their views and have joined the dovish perspective. In the final analysis, people like Rabin, Peres, Bar-Lev, Gad Ya'akobi, Shahal, and others were very removed from the dovish perspective and they have shifted considerably (this is true of people within the Likud as well). We are constantly getting new support, in terms of agreement with our opinions. It is not true that we are losing people. We are very weak politically, in the street and in the political system. But we are not weak in public opinion.

The question is, why aren't we succeeding? I will give three explanations. The first has to do precisely with the clarity of the solution and the feeling that we are going in the right direction. The view that only the Right can do this . . . has caused the dovish camp, including the Labor party, to give up the desire to return to power, out of a secret fear that if they return to power, God forbid, they will face either a civil war or other untenable conflicts. Because not only would the Likud have to face falling from power, it would have to face losing Eretz Yisrael. Falling from power will make [the Likud] furious and dangerous as can be. As soon as we conveyed to the public this implicit message, that we are not the ones to do it, that only the Likud can do it, we removed ourselves as candidates for power. People don't join us because we have prematurely given up the desire to get back into power.

The second thing: The dialogue with the United States has complicated things immeasurably. In the final analysis, the return of Algeria to the Algerians, the solution in Vietnam, the end of apartheid, these things were done autonomously by the states involved. The United States is so deeply involved in the Arab–Israeli matter in an incomprehensible and unclear fashion. The complicated and twisting way in which [the U.S.] supports our dovish doctrine, but on the other hand does everything possible to prevent this doctrine from being realized, and the fact that instead of the dialogue being between Arabs and us, it has become a dialogue between America and us—[these things] distract us, and bring us to a dead end. I think one of the duties of the dovish camp is to try to remove the Americans from the dialogue. I think it is destructive to look to the Americans to come with their big stick. . . . I think this is a vain hope. . . .

The third thing is the attempt of the dovish camp to rely on pragmatic explanations and to give up entirely on moral explanations, out of fear that they will call us "sensitive souls"; that we are "Arab-lovers"; that they will call us all kinds of things. . . . It turns out that pragmatic explanations of self-interest do not work. Giving up on moral persuasion . . . does not work. I think the ethical thing is still important to every person, as a person, and that people still get very upset when they are told that they are doing something bad, that they are not moral. To tell them that they are betraying their interests or ruining their image, this is less important to them.

I believe that morality ultimately wins. When I saw that electrician from Gdansk who organized the first demonstration against communism, who in fact removed the first stone from the communist structure, coming here as the president of Poland to ask forgiveness from the Jewish people, I said to myself that morality wins out. The disintegration of the Soviet Union is also a moral matter, it is the moral failure of communism. Havel, the poet who was in jail and became president of Czechoslovakia, is a moral victory. The downfall of apartheid in South Africa is a moral issue. In the final analysis, the moral issue does win out. □

Plenary: Why have the social-change and peace movements been having trouble winning a majority of Israelis to their side?

DRORA KASS (Translated from Hebrew)
Drora Kass is the director of the U.S. office of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East.

There is good news and bad news. The good news is that we are not suffering from increasing marginalization. On the contrary, even though our views are not being accepted by the majority, a growing number of Israelis support the formula of territories for peace.

Why is there such a large gap between the urgency of our message and the lack of urgency in our actions? . . . We are still doing the same kinds of things we did twenty years ago: demonstrations, articles, educational work, etc. Why don't our actions reflect the seriousness of our message? I think there are a number of answers: deep ambivalence, maybe a preference for inaction over action, denial of certain acts. For example: Two weeks ago I attended a meeting of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East. When it was proposed that we pass a resolution declaring that Israel should not torture Palestinian prisoners, a former Minister of Justice said that such a resolution is unacceptable because there is no proof that any such thing is taking place. I think that some of us tend not to see the Palestinians as equal to us. I also think that some of us have not internalized the legitimacy of the other side, just as the other side has not internalized our legitimacy.

We must give practical—I emphasize practical—answers to the fears about peace and what form it will take. We also have a tendency to play on the other side's court [that of the Likud and the Right]. We accept their definitions of patriotism: Patriotism means criticism of Arabs and delegitimization of the Palestinians as partners to negotiations. We must persuade the public that the only relevant topic regarding negotiations with the Palestinians is their ability to deliver.

We must take apart myths more successfully than we have been able to so far. For instance, the myth that willingness to negotiate with Palestinians means giving them a certificate of good behavior; that the change in the Palestinian camp is only a change in words; that compromise equals weakness; that the whole world is against us; that there is no one to talk to; that Israel can make peace with the Arab countries before it makes peace with the Palestinians; that if we get rid of the PLO, we will find more moderate Palestinians; that the Arab–Israeli conflict is a zero-sum game.

We must also decide where we stand regarding the issue of external influence, or external pressure. I think we should speak about a positive social-economic package—positive incentives—and not get hung up on economic sanctions, incentives that European countries and the United States might give to Israel, on the condition that Israel makes progress in the peace process.

In New York, where I live, people know that there is a peace movement in Israel, but they have no idea that it represents half of the country. Shamir's voice is heard there very clearly, as are other similar voices. It is very important that the other voice, which does represent half of Israel, be heard just as strongly.

MK Uzi Baram (Translated from Hebrew)

MK Uzi Baram is former chair of the Labor party.

In my party there are many who say that it's not a good idea to speak about peace, national security, and the Territories as primary subjects: What's most important is to get back into power by capitalizing on the distress of the new immigrants and other social and economic problems. Once we accomplish that, we can also address issues of the peace process and national security. I don't know what to call this view other than bullshit. The problem of this country is that the continental divide between Left and Right crosses through these issues of state. Go ask any ordinary citizen if he knows the positions of Labor and Likud on social issues. If he does know, then he deserves to be in the Knesset. But if you ask him where the Labor party stands on national security issues, he will tell you that Labor is more moderate. . . .

Last week I spoke to a group of Russians who are leaning toward Peace Now. One of them got up and said, "Look. The European Market has softened its stand toward Israel under Shamir. There are more new Israeli embassies than there were before. The U.S. Congress has decided not to cut back on funding for settlements." My answer is that if the $10 billion in aid passes without political conditions, the electoral support of the Right will increase. . . . I say to all of the peace parties (including Labor, if it can still be considered a peace party) that we must make the peace process our primary issue. I welcome linking the issues of peace and social welfare. But you must understand that . . . the questions of peace, national security, and attitude toward the Arabs determine how people vote more than any social or economic issue.

Janet Aviad (Translated from Hebrew)

Janet Aviad is an activist for Peace Now. She lectures at the Hebrew University School for Education.

I read the title of the session—what are the problems facing the peace movement?—but so far the most objective problems have not been emphasized. I'll start with the continuous hostility that derives from the conflict. We've had wars here, we've had losses, and this has caused deep wounds in the nation.

Second of all, the ordinary citizen is deeply suspicious of Arabs. These suspicions are justified in terms of the real and ultimate goals of the Arabs. These suspicions do not depend on what I am going to say, or what the peace camp might say, but on what the Arabs will do. And they did badly during the war in the Gulf and this hurt us. This is an objective fact; it has nothing to do with us and we should recognize this.

Third is the complexity of our message. It is not easy to achieve real national security, a strong army, and peace. We want a conditional peace, and this is hard for ordinary citizens to understand. It is very hard to persuade them, especially in the face of hostility, terror, and fear.

Fourth, the ordinary citizen does not fully appreciate the importance of the international arena. This nation, to a large extent, does not want normalization [i.e., to become a people like all other peoples]. This is rooted in the Jewish tradition— what do we care what the goyim think? "And the nation shall stand alone." The Jewish tradition tends to emphasize our abnormality. This is what causes suspicion of non-Jews, fear of the UN, of American pressure, and of other normal and rational things. Objectively, this is very hard to overcome. Another important aspect of the lack of regard for diplomacy is that many Israelis feel that diplomacy is merely words; facts are what count. This also comes from the Jewish tradition.... The ordinary citizen finds it hard to believe in political processes. Wars seem more real. This also is related to the anti-*Galut* philosophy of people like Gush Emunim leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger. Levinger is typical of this philosophy within nationalist Judaism. This is a man who takes his submachine gun and shoots. He does this in front of the whole world, and people think this is okay. But Levinger is only a symptom of a much more serious problem, that of a complete lack of confidence in non-Jews and a total reliance on ourselves, our army, and our strength. So we shoot. This brings me to another psychological factor—the fear of impotence, the macho complex, particularly among Oriental Jews.

Now these are all objective problems, which can't be solved by conferences or position papers, but only through long-term processes. There are some changes due to the peace movement and the peace parties. Our slogan of "money for [poor] neighborhoods, not for settlements" has had an effect. There is a significant change regarding the PLO. In April and May 1990, three polls showed that 50 to 60 percent of Israelis support talks with the PLO. But then there was an unsuccessful terrorist attack along the coast, and the war in the Gulf, and this figure dwindled to 20 percent. This is an objective problem. But what help is talk of long-term planning and strategy?

I think the peace camp has a problem not of long-term strategy, but of short-term tactics. The tactic of talking to Palestinian figures in the Territories worked very well and there was a real change in public opinion. But this tactic blew up because of the war. So we need new tactics, which in fact already exist. There has been an attempt to reach out to development towns, to reach out to the immigrants. I don't want to defend the peace movement—maybe we have not done enough—but it is much more important to recognize the objective problems we face and to try to gain real, constructive strength. We must recruit people and money, and organize demonstrations.

MK Dedi Zucker (Translated from Hebrew)

Dedi Zucker, one of the founders of Peace Now, and secretary-general of RATZ (Citizens' Rights movement) from 1984 to 1988, was elected to the Knesset in 1986.

The thing that worries me most [in the remarks of certain conference speakers] ... is the hidden assumption that we have time. In other words, we have a generation or two in which to work, to persuade, to preach, to explain, and things will work themselves out in another forty or fifty years. In another forty or fifty years, we will have experienced another four or five rounds of war. And I don't know of any insurance agent who is willing to guarantee that we will always win. I emphatically reject the assumption that underlies some of the views expressed at this conference that say we are a total failure. It can be proven that in one aspect of our political activity, we are a very impressive political success story. Every serious survey shows that since the beginning of the intifada, there has been a continual increase in the support of our positions (I'm not talking now about voting patterns, I'm talking about positions). This is clear and indisputable. The problem is, why don't people who support our political conclusions join our parliamentary or extraparliamentary efforts, whether it be Peace Now or one of the political parties?

Fluctuations in support are not episodic, they are not coincidental, and they are not the result of any particular position of the Likud or of Labor. The causes are environmental, regional, and are connected to our relationships with the Palestinians and with the Arab world. In other words, a change in leadership (of the Labor party, for example) is no cause for optimism, because that is not what will make us succeed. This is true as well of the recent change in public opinion in our favor. This is not the result of any talent on our part, or of any particular failure on the part of the Likud. Therefore, the

assumption that developments depend entirely on what happens within the peace movement is incorrect.

The recent change in public opinion is not ideological. It is essentially a pragmatic change, in the sense that people have become more practical and realistic. This is not a result of our adopting a position in favor of the weak in Israeli society, or some socialist position. This has nothing to do with social issues. Whoever goes to the poor neighborhoods representing egalitarian ideals that conjure up the image of Kupat Holim [the agencies of socialized medicine in Israel] or of socialism is guaranteed never to win an election, and that's the way it should be. These kinds of arguments have shown themselves to be failures in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Everyone knows that this is a social program that has gone bankrupt, and taxpayers today are paying for these failures.

What happened is that people, for the first time since the beginning of the intifada, feel that they are beginning to pay the personal and collective price of the Occupation. This does not mean that our camp has become a sudden success, or that its egalitarian message has brought it new voters. In every poll we discover that a third of the Likud's voters have reached the same political conclusion that we have: that in order to live here, we need to give up the Territories. This is not an ideological change.

I reject something else that I hear all the time and that I think is a huge mistake. This is the claim that we need a special message for Oriental Jews.... The national security message is what persuades people, whether Oriental, Russian, or Indian. This is as clear as can be; one finds it in all the surveys. One's position is determined according to ... the personal and collective price that we have to pay. So how can we accelerate this change? We have to emphasize the personal price, the military price, the diplomatic price, the economic price that we pay by being an island under siege. We must explain to everyone that those ... who fight the "mortgage" being made available to the settlements adhere to realistic social priorities.... [We must make the claim] that Israeli society must make substantial changes in its economic priorities, and that as long as we are engaged in a struggle with the Palestinians and the Arab world we won't have access to the European Common Market. This is the kind of argument that all people, whether educated or not, appreciate.

In conclusion, the view that we need a separate message for Oriental Jews—for the "neighborhoods," for the weak—and a different message for those who are stronger, is hypocritical, unserious, and ineffective. If someone can give me one political example in Israel, since 1948, that shows how this kind of "egalitarian" message has succeeded politically, I will be willing to change my views completely.

SHLOMO ELBAZ (Translated from Hebrew)

Shlomo Elbaz is a lecturer in literature at Hebrew University, and the head of East for Peace.

The situation is very bad. I disagree with those who said that we must separate the peace process from social issues. The two are very strongly connected.... It is very important to know what the attitudes are in the poor neighborhoods and in the development towns. Do you know what people there say? They say that if people like Peace Now are so concerned about peace, they should first make peace with us Oriental Jews before they make peace with the Palestinians. The attitude of Oriental Jews is not against the message of peace, it is against the messengers of peace. You must know this: The wounds of the fifties—both the material and the psychological wounds—have not yet healed. Members of the peace camp of today, especially the left wing of the Labor party, are perceived as the heirs of the establishment that brought about the creation of a "Second Israel" and "Third Israel" [the terms used to describe the second-class status of Israel's Mizrachi population]. Political attitudes are part and parcel of the social problem.

If most Oriental Jews are not in the peace camp, this is not because they are against peace. The reason has to do with the image of the peace camp. We must put forth a serious effort in the rehabilitation of image, that of Oriental Jews as perceived by peace advocates, and that of peace as perceived by Oriental Jews. If we want to change the image of peace, we must first change the image of the advocates of peace. When advocates of peace are perceived to be advocates of equality, things will change. □

Because of the frequent criticisms of Peace Now voiced by Israelis in some sessions of the conference, we thought it important to give Peace Now an opportunity to respond.

JONATHAN JACOBY

Jonathan Jacoby is president of Americans for Peace Now. For seven years, he was executive director of the New Israel Fund, which supports social-justice and rights groups in Israel.

Michael Lerner has once again demonstrated his unique brand of prophetic chutzpa: Much good can be said about the *Tikkun* Conference. The sessions on peace organizing strategy yielded new ideas and provided Israeli activists with a chance to

dialogue with each other. Mizrachim and women of all groups, whose perspectives on peace are not often enough heard in Israel, played a prominent role in the proceedings. And there was a rare opportunity for Israelis and Americans to learn from each other's experience.

Unfortunately, the conference was sometimes marred by a divisive spirit. A debate about the peace movement's commitment to social justice degenerated into a backward and rhetorical look at the mistakes of the past, rather than a constructive discussion of current strategies. Only a passing reference was made to the fact that for the past two years Peace Now has invested substantial resources into Project Majority, which works in poor neighborhoods and development towns. Recognizing the connection between the injustices that oppress Mizrachim and the annexationist policies of the Israeli government, Project Majority revolutionized Peace Now's organizing approach by translating the analysis of socio-economic oppression into political action. It is regrettable that no time was spent thinking about how to improve Project Majority, instead of recycling accusations and suspicions about Ashkenazi self-interest and colonialist intentions.

Ironically, many activists were concerned about what they saw as elitism on the part of the conference organizers. When Lerner wrote in the May 23 edition of the *Los Angeles Times* that "the Israeli peace movement is stuck" and "convinced that it has no way to change the political stalemate in Israel," he hardly inspired the trust of his Israeli counterparts. Those of us who work in partnership with Israelis must guard against imposing our organizing models and political values. Greater care could have been taken by the conference organizers in this regard.

These difficulties did not stop the Israeli peace camp, including Peace Now, from cooperating with *Tikkun* and helping to organize the conference. Nor should the problems obscure the conference's contributions. We ought to learn from what was good *and* what was bad about the conference and find ways to work more closely with each other. There may be no more important task if, as we hope, the peace process unfolds in the months and years ahead.

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Plenary: Solidarity with the Israeli peace movement

MICHAEL LERNER

Michael Lerner is editor of Tikkun *magazine and author of* Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychodynamics of Individual and Social Transformation. *He divides his time each year between Israel and the U.S.*

It is precisely because we strongly embrace Judaism and Jewish history, because that historical experience defines our lives and our hopes and our future, that we feel the need to do everything possible to change the current course of Israeli policy. This is not solely a task for Israelis. Israel represents itself as the Jewish state; it speaks and acts in the name of the Jewish people. It talks about the history of the Jewish people as *its* history. But Jews all around the world embrace that history, and have a claim to its legacy.

Judaism emerged as the revolutionary claim that the world could be fundamentally altered, that the existing systems of oppression were not legitimate, and that everything that existed could be remade according to a moral order. According to Judaism, the fundamental power that governs the universe is the power that makes possible liberation from slavery. It is not just the physical act of enslavement, but the deeper scars of psychological slavery that can and must be overcome. This is the meaning of the most frequently repeated injunction in Torah (in various forms): When you come into your own land, do not oppress the stranger. Remember that *you* were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The meaning of this commandment is staggering: The Sinai revelation of Torah seems to recognize the fundamental nature of the "repetition compulsion," the tendency of all human beings to act toward others in the way that they were treated themselves. We are thus instructed that human beings, unlike the rest of nature, need not be dominated by eternally recurring patterns. We can act freely, and hence break the impulse to inflict on others the pain that we have been subject to. If there is one essential message in Judaism it is this: The force governing the universe makes possible revolutionary transformation, at both the societal and the individual levels. The Jewish people are to be witnesses to this possibility.

Of course, the people who heard this revelation were themselves limited human beings; the way they heard the message of Sinai was conditioned by their own psychological, political, and historical limitations. This is true of every liberatory tradition throughout human history—the people who articulate it are themselves flawed. Every liberatory tradition embodies both its liberatory content as well as some elements that continue

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the oppressive realities and oppressive psychological and intellectual frameworks that existed at the time. There is no escaping this—even moments of human transcendence take shape within the context of human limitations. As a result, mixed within the Torah are messages of cruelty and oppression, sexism, national chauvinism, and religious craziness. But what is exciting about Torah is the extent to which it transcends some of this and puts forward a different message, the extent to which we as a people have been able to articulate a different possibility and a different world. No one should be surprised at Joshua or at the *loe-tehanem* [have no mercy] consciousness in Devarim—this is the reality of the world in which people lived. But what is surprising is the command *ve'ahavta la ger*—you should love the stranger, the "Other," because this breaks all our expectations and transcends the ways that we have been conditioned to think.

It's the same with every liberatory tradition—with Marxism, with psychoanalysis, with feminism. All these traditions are limited by the historical consciousness of those who started them. These traditions must be judged then, primarily for what is unique in them, the elements that transcend the limitations within them.

In every age, the Jewish people have faced realities that make us distrust Judaism's liberatory message, that make us skeptical, and make us believe less in this God and more in the inevitability of evil. When we believe that ultimately evil will triumph, we accommodate that fear and become more like the world we originally wanted to change. The central message of Judaism thus reminds us that the world was created by another force, one that makes it possible to smash the systems of oppression (and a force that will ultimately triumph, in part through our help). But the religion is not always helpful. True enough, through the ages Judaism has expressed the voice of the God of transcendence. Unfortunately, at times it has also incorporated the voice of pain and cruelty that dominates the consciousness of those who are shaping the religion. So we must come back to the fundamental Sh'ma—listen, O Israel, the God who made possible the destruction of Egyptian oppression is also the God of nature (the God who governs the world) and this force is One—that is, it is the power that permeates, and is part of, everything.

It has been hard for us as a people to keep alive this faith and this vision. Precisely to the extent that we insisted that the world could be remade, we became a thorn in the side of every ruling class—and the members of that class in turn have oppressed us. As the oppression deepened, it became harder for many Jews to believe that the world could be changed and made into a just and moral order. So, ironically, two things happened: On the one hand, in response to oppression, many Jews became more rigidly locked into the religious system of Judaism, its customs, its mitzvot, its culture and history. On the other hand, these same Jews became disillusioned with its revolutionary message, which they believed in less and less even as they mouthed it more and more in ritual incantations. Eventually, we inherited a religion whose followers speak each Sabbath about the revolution that was the Exodus, but don't seem to hear what they are saying, don't really get the revolutionary implications of their words. Hence the command "Sh'ma Yisrael"—listen O Israel, pay attention to what has just happened to you and what it means about the possibility of human liberation, that YHWH, the force in the universe that makes possible human liberation, is actually the governing force in this universe—this command is as much a central challenge today as it was in the Sinai desert over three millennia ago. The problem is that Jewish institutions, Jewish leadership, and Jewish intellectual approaches today are often shaped by people who don't have any faith in the possibility of the triumph of the forces of good, and hence don't believe the message of the God of the Bible has any relevance to contemporary reality.

The people who have led us into the current mess in Israel—the same people who discount the historical role of the Jewish people as witnesses to the possibility of personal and societal transformation—don't truly believe in the God of the Bible, a God that makes possible a revolutionary remaking of the world. They claim to be advocates of Jewish particularism, to be against left-wing universalism, but in fact they advocate a particularism that merely repeats the values of all the other nations. They insist that, ultimately, might makes right, and that because we, the Jewish people, have won militarily we therefore have the right to rule over others. They do not understand that universalism—a concern for the fate of others and not just oneself—*is* the particularism of the Jewish people (as the Prophets say, "for my house shall be a house for *all the nations*"). Those who concern themselves only with the fate of the Jewish people may call themselves religious, or they may call themselves Jewish nationalists, but in fact they are assimilationist wolves wearing sheep's clothing—using the language of Judaism and Jewish history to put forward a message that relies on power and force to legitimize oppression.

Nor is the politics of self-interest in the interest of the Jewish people! Power and force will not triumph—Rome and the legacy of Roman imperialism (in its many contemporary forms) will be defeated. To rely on the logic of power—the legacy of

Rome—is a tragic error for the Jews. Those who have led us down this path have put the Jewish people and the Jewish state in deep trouble. Israel has traditionally relied on the U.S. for military support. Yet many in the U.S. ruling elite have long believed that American long-term interests would best be served by a tilt toward the Arabs. The ascendancy of this position has been constrained by two forces: first, those who thought the U.S. needed Israel for military reasons; and second, those popular forces who insisted that the U.S. should support Israeli democracy on ideological grounds. The end of the cold war, and the political upheavals brought about by the recent war in the Gulf, demonstrate quite clearly that, from a military standpoint, U.S. reliance on Israel is likely to decrease in the years ahead. So the argument for the U.S. tilt toward Israel will depend increasingly on the ability of Israel's supporters to convince Americans that Israel still embodies democratic and human-rights values that America ought to support.

If the Occupation continues—with all the necessary restrictions on human rights that such a military operation entails—Israel may soon find its supporters in the U.S. less and less capable of making this argument convincingly and hence less capable of delivering the goods—military or otherwise. So the Occupation is *not* in the self-interest of Israel, even narrowly defined. The very existence of the Jewish people, its *raison d'être,* is to be a witness to a kind of logic in the world different from that of self-interest and power, and hence a witness to a God who is with the poor and the oppressed. It would be a historical tragedy if the very state that performed the valuable work of saving Jews from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia simultaneously became the state that *destroyed* Jewishness by allowing Jewishness to be identified with the selfishness and power-worship that is the norm for the nations of the world. The religious task of being the people of Israel as defined in the Torah must not be subordinated to the desire for normalization of our status within a world that has long abandoned moral and religious values. Our deep commitment to Jewishness, God, and the Jewish people compels us to dedicate our energies to changing the current directions of Israeli policy, and to repairing the distortions in Jewish consciousness that the Occupation has created.

We've been engaged at this conference in a conversation between Israelis and Americans because Israelis have been willing to open up and talk honestly about some of the problems that are being faced in the Israeli peace movement.

Though some of the problems we have uncovered in the peace movement require serious reflection, and perhaps even new directions and new strategies, I want to make it clear that we have nothing but respect for the contributions and hard work of people in Peace Now and other sectors of the peace movement. Peace Now has my full support—it continues to be the most widely recognized voice of the peace movement in Israel, and its visibility and the respect it has earned must be preserved. If some of the Israelis at this conference have articulated a critique of how Peace Now functions, or asked that it change its name or direction to include the demand for social justice, such criticisms should be understood within the context of respect for the basic project of Peace Now. I for one believe that Peace Now makes an important contribution and deserves our continued support and encouragement.

Two issues have been highlighted very strongly: 1. The Israeli peace movement and the social-change forces need to deal more seriously with the oppression of the Sephardim and Mizrachim in this society. This involves a difficult and painful recognition on the part of many Ashkenazim in the peace movement: that large numbers of the majority population of Sephardim and Mizrachim in this country have identified the peace movement with the same forces that treated them so disrespectfully in the 1950s and 1960s. In order to change that image, the peace movement not only has to address peace, but, to become a movement for peace now *and* justice now. Addressing these social issues would be a transformation in that direction.

2. The Jewish religious tradition and the national historical symbols of the Jewish people must be reintegrated into the language and practice of the peace movement. Too often the peace movement has been represented as caring only about the Other, and not enough about the particular experience of the Jewish people; the peace movement needs to honor the language and the historical experience of the Jewish people.

One of the major debates that I think we're all facing is the question of pressure on Israel: Will it pay? Will it make sense? And there's a considerable concern that if there's pressure on Israel—unless it's massive pressure—it will actually be counterproductive. Although many peace activists have said privately to many people in this room that they think what needs to happen is for there to be pressure on the government of Israel, they're very reluctant to say that publicly because of the potential backlash effect that such pressure may have in the Israeli population. And one of the things that's happened here in the discussion is the emergence of a different idea: to focus on a series of incentives for peace. The particular formulation that I've come up with is that the Israeli peace movement and the United States peace movement should be asking the United States government to be offering essentially the following: a massive plan of aid to all of the Middle East, one major component of which

would be a promise for five years of aid—15 billion dollars a year—to be given to Israel to help resolve resettlement of Soviet *olim,* to help in the rebuilding of the poorer Mizrachi neighborhoods, and to help in the financial problems that are facing Israel. That aid would be made available to Israel upon the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state that provided Israel with all the necessary security guarantees. That kind of incentive for peace is very different from an aid cut because it's not calling for a decrease in existing aid, but rather it calls for an incentive to peace. This aid would provide the peace movement with something very positive, something that shows what the costs of maintaining the Occupation are and what the incentives for transforming the Occupation could be—and this could be decisive in the next Israeli election. Finding strategies for joint cooperation, ways that we can work together, is one of the reasons why we have come to Israel. The Israeli Right knows it has many organizations in the U.S. working to support its political program. The emergence of *Tikkun* represents the development of a voice that can support the Israeli Peace Movement in the U.S. and articulate the peace movement's needs, concerns, and strategies to U.S. policymakers and to a newly emerging type of American Jew who knows that to be a caring Jew, and a Jew who is in touch with the fundamental truths of Judaism is to be a Jew who supports peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians.

Paul Wellstone

Paul Wellstone is a U.S. senator from Minnesota.

I want to explain why I'm here. So much has been made of the fact that a United States senator is at this *Tikkun* peace conference. And I don't really know why so much has been made of this. Because I have so much respect for what you've done—Israelis, American Jews—you've taken time out of your lives, away from loved ones, away from other things, and you've given it to try and bring about peace; to make this a better Middle East and to make this a better world. For that I thank you and that's why I'm here and proud to speak at this conference.

I'm from Minnesota. There are about 35,000 Jewish people in our state. But for the first time in the history of the United States of America, I think, you had two Jews running against one another for a United States senate seat. In Minnesota, of all states. Don't ask me why. I think it's a testimony to the tolerance of the people of Minnesota and their respect and sense of fairness. And surely, the whole question of our positions about Israel was an issue. You had two candidates running for the United States Senate, both of whom loved Israel. But we had reached some different conclusions about what should be done policy-wise out of the love for Israel. I struggled with this issue, as many of you have. I spoke to a group of American Arabs and was proud to do so. I talked about ways we could work together on domestic issues. I said I would be willing to speak out about human-rights violations here, and I would always be willing to speak out against the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, and they applauded. And then I said, "I hope you, as American Arabs, will also speak out and make it clear that Arab countries must recognize and make peace with Israel. I love Israel, and I hope you will speak out." And there were a few boos. It's not that easy.

I've visited Yad Va'Shem, the holocaust memorial, and I want to tell you something. I'll never forget that visit. It made me sensitive to Jewish history, it made me sensitive to what has happened to our people, and I wrote in the book, at the end of that visit, that I dedicate this visit to my parents, who are no longer alive, and to the future of the Jewish people. And I mean that. I care fiercely—and I believe everybody here cares fiercely—about the security of Israel. By the same token, I visited with many other people with different perspectives. I spent some time in a refugee camp in the West Bank. I looked at small Palestinian children, ages five and six, and I said to myself, "If I were their father, I would be angry about the conditions of their lives and I would never settle for the conditions of their lives and I would know that I have to struggle for change." I think it is absolutely realistic to say that we can, and we should, and we must see a political settlement, a land-for-peace settlement, where it is clear that the security of Israel is guaranteed as are the rights of Palestinian people. That is what we must work for.

I don't think we can talk about a peace process that will really lead to peace if, at the same time, the Likud party continues to expand the settlements. I will speak out against the expansion of settlements on the West Bank. I also know that for those organizations that have worked so hard and produced such reputable reports documenting human-rights violations, it is important for us to speak out when those human-rights violations take place.

To me, a greater Israel is not geography. A greater Israel is an economically strong Israel ... an Israel with a commitment to education ... a whole Israel ... a moral Israel. A greater Israel is a country where there is justice and there is peace. There are a few questions in my mind that I hope we can work out together. How can Israeli and American Jewish peace activities strengthen one another? We must do that, and I'm interested in helping that come about. How can we expand our base and bet-

ter communicate our compelling message that we care fiercely about the security of Israel? I think that it's vitally important to do that. How can we get the peace process off dead center? I think that if we continue with the present course, Israeli and Palestinian children will kill each other for generations to come, and now is the time to make sure that we push with everything that we have for a peace process.

Finally, how can we continue to renew our hope, and our energy, and maintain our sense of community even when there are defeats, even when there are diplomatic setbacks, even when it is the most difficult of times? That is why we are here tonight—to support one another. Before moving to Minnesota, I lived in North Carolina. When I was a student at the University of North Carolina, the civil-rights movement was being built. Black people used to talk about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. . . . [and they used to say] that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as he left the pulpit and went out into the community and spoke with the people, "walked his talk." He did not separate the life that he led from the words that he spoke. That was over two decades ago. It is now time for all of us to walk our talk, no matter how difficult it is, with a voice, and with a vision, and with a way that extends beyond war, and hatred, and fear. Not a heaven on earth, but a better earth on earth, that is why I believe we're here, to make this a better earth on earth.

MK Moshe Shachal (Translated from Hebrew)

Moshe Shachal is a member of the Labor party, and was elected to the Knesset in 1972.

The end of the war in the Gulf has not solved Israel's problems. It has only made the danger to Israel's existence clearer, if the present situation continues. The Labor party must stop playing on the court of the Right, and state that without partition [of the land], there is no way to achieve peace. It should also talk about principles that are an essential part of us, essential to preserve the moral and legal character of Israel. I am convinced that we can do this if the Left and the center—who represent a "sane" Zionism—unite, because we now have an historical opportunity. We all can see that the priorities of the Right are unpatriotic and antisocial. The stalemate in the peace process will inevitably bring about war, and the economic stalemate will push Israel from the family of developed nations. Unemployment and social inequalities will only grow. Social services are already crumbling. Israel will continue to chase stone-throwing youths, in the West Bank and Gaza—in order to protect a few settlers, who live at the public's expense at the cost of billions, as hundreds of thousands of citizens, immigrants and native-born, face unemployment.

Yitzhak Shamir revealed his true belief today when he said most clearly that peace will come when the Arabs accept the fact—[a fact] which he would like to create—that all of the territory belongs to us. He has no intention of compromising and reaching a solution.

We must speak the truth to the Israeli public and say that its support of the Likud and its allies will bring about stalemate and war. The only feasible solution is negotiations for peace that are predicated on compromise; negotiations with any Palestinian who is willing to recognize Israel's right to exist; with any Palestinian who is willing to negotiate and to refrain from terror and violence; negotiations that will lead to recognition on our part of a Palestinian entity that will make peace with us and agree on security measures.

MK Yair Tzaban (Translated from Hebrew)

Yair Tzaban is a leading spokesperson and theorist for the MAPAM party.

I will start with some comments regarding the crisis in the left-wing movements of the world. I think that the collapse of the Soviet bloc, on the one hand, and the absence of a social democratic alternative on the other hand, have had and will continue to have a huge impact on the crisis of left-wing movements in the world. We are in the middle of a transition period and I dare to paraphrase a saying by Marx. Marx once said that the leading ideas of the time are usually the ideas of the ruling class. I would paraphrase: The ideas of world leaders in our time are the ideas of the ruling class in the U.S., ideas that are alien to the basic values of the Left. I don't think that this will always be the case; I think things will change in the world and in the United States.

Israel's connection to the United States is very strong, stronger than that of any other country that I know. On the other hand, the failure of Israel's socialist pretensions is so painful precisely because of the achievements of the past and the potential they showed. If you add to this the deep legacy of our Jewish tradition of "a people that shall dwell alone," of a deep foundation of belief that the world is divided into Jews and non-Jews, this is another hardship in our attempt to overcome the roadblocks that face us. We must also mention the trauma of the Holocaust, and the cynical way in which it has been used by different forces.

When we put all these factors up against the record of the Israeli–Arab conflict, let us not forget that the Israeli–Arab conflict is unique. It has no precedent in political history. There is no precedent for two peoples

claiming the same piece of land as their homeland. There is no previous model for a successful solution to which we can point. We have very difficult partners [the Arabs] and let us not hesitate to admit that some of their actions and statements make it very difficult for us in overcoming the roadblocks.

Under these circumstances, I think that the change in attitudes that has taken place in Israel in the last few years is surprisingly good. A research paper that is about to be published (by Professor Asher Arian and Dr. Mina Tzemach) shows that between 1986 and 1991, dovish attitudes have been rising slowly but steadily, along with a polarization of attitudes in favor of "transferist" positions on the right of the political map. This is without a doubt encouraging. These data also relate to people's attitudes regarding "territories for peace"; to the recognition of the existence of the Palestinian people; and to the need to talk with them.

Would any of this have been accomplished without Peace Now, without the peace parties, without the writers, artists, and journalists who for years have preached and tried to explain the justness of these ideas? I say this because these efforts were made under difficult conditions and because it is important that people know that there is a reward for their efforts.

But it is also true that these changes do not translate into electoral gains. The result is that the influence of dovish Likud-supporters is on the rise. People are changing their opinions but not their votes. This creates a huge problem for the peace movement and a terrific roadblock for the peace process. When the Shamir government invited Syria to the negotiating table, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin said, "Why are you doing this? Have you gone mad?" So how is it possible to create an alternative voice in this kind of political arena, in this kind of situation?

What was the thinking in our camp, in the back of our minds, for twenty-four years? The thinking was that the United States would do the work for us—that the United States would force Israel to withdraw from the Territories. This thinking is what has caused the atrophy of the Israeli peace movement. Good people, people with values and a conscience, would answer the call of Peace Now to demonstrate once every three months ... and this would soothe their conscience for the next three months. Because in the depth of their consciousness was the thought that in the long run, [the Americans] will do the work for us.

We have to choose: immigration or occupation; absorbing a million Jews, or ruling over two million Palestinians. We can no longer hold the stick at both ends.

I am optimistic because I look at a world that, not without difficulties, is moving toward the tearing down of walls, toward the downfall of tyrants, toward the cessation of foreign oppression, in Moscow, in Berlin, in Chile, in South Africa. Israel will not be on another planet as we once were.

YAEL DAYAN (Translated from Hebrew)

Yael Dayan was born in Israel in 1939. She is the author of eight books, including most recently My Father, His Daughter. *She has long been active in the Labor party and in the peace movement.*

I don't feel that this is the right time, or that there is a need, for a "where did we go wrong" conference. I don't think we need new directions, I don't think the situation is new, I think we are facing the same walls with the same tools. I appreciate the partnership of Senator Wellstone, but when he thanks us, the good people of peace who "give of their time"... Mr. Senator and those Americans present here, we are not "giving of our time." This is our life. This is not some hobby we find time for on Saturday nights. If we don't constantly engage in a search for peace we won't be able to live as Zionists. We won't have an existence. There won't be an Israel. So before I look for a Jewish existence, or a universal existence I want to live. This is my only message. And if I want the Palestinians to live too and to have rights, it is because if they don't have rights, I won't have a life here, and not because I am a missionary for equal rights, or an advocate of joining the world of liberals and rights-advocates and humanists. Too many problems have been created in the name of liberal, European humanism, Western culture, or however you want to call it. Contrary to what *Tikkun* says, there is no such thing as "Oriental Jews not being allowed to assume leadership roles in the peace movement." Leadership is not given, it is taken. Did anyone ever give us, ever give me anything? Oriental Jews are the majority in Israel. They have complaints that the peace camp won't give them leadership roles? Why don't they complain about the government they voted for that doesn't give them education, employment, clothing, advancement, that only pays them the lip service of Knesset members and demagoguery in the town squares? We have as much room as you need—come and take it! I tell this to whoever accuses the peace movement of being white, elitist, or Ashkenazi.

Whoever says that the Labor party is not a viable alternative, [I say that] there won't be peace without the Labor party. There can be war without the Labor party.... Let's emphasize the messages of the doves within the Labor party. We have a real chance and we can be a real alternative.

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JEWISH FEMINISM

Facing the Ambiguity of God

Judith Plaskow

Much feminist work on God-language, including my own, has focused on particular aspects of God to the neglect of others. Feminist characterizations of the sacred have emerged largely out of two central experiences: coming to self-awareness in community with other women; and claiming the healing power of connection to the natural world. These experiences have generated a rich array of images for God focusing on female, natural, and non-hierarchical metaphors. Such images depict God as source, wellspring and fountain, mother and womb of life. God is Shekhina, Goddess, all that seeks life; earth, moon, lover, friend—and so on.

It is entirely legitimate and even essential for a new community finding its voice to speak and write about God by drawing upon its own most fundamental experiences. In a profoundly misogynistic culture that has ruthlessly exploited the natural environment—and that has linked women with the natural world on many levels of practice and discourse—feminist metaphors for God elucidate long-buried dimensions of divinity. These metaphors are not just political correctives to dominant modes of seeing and being; they arise from and refer to real discoveries of the sacred in places we had long stopped looking to find it.

Insofar as feminist metaphors represent a deliberate attempt to capture particular aspects of experience, however, they are also necessarily partial. In a discussion in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (Spring 1989), Catherine Madsen and a number of respondents criticized the "niceness" of God in feminist theology. Madsen argued that once God becomes Goddess or acquires female characteristics, she is connected too exclusively with the so-called female virtues of nurturing, healing, and caretaking, and is cordoned off from the savagery of the world. A "nice" female God does not take us sufficiently beyond traditional images, Madsen argued—any more than a "Queen of the Universe" undoes the hierarchical nature of traditional male imagery.

How do we name the power in the world that makes us know our vulnerability, that terrifies and overwhelms us?

A number of feminist writers and religious thinkers have begun to articulate a fuller and more complex account of the divine than the notion of a "nice" female God allows for. But I basically agree with Madsen that the ambiguity of God has not received enough attention in feminist discourse. Rereading the story of Nadab and Abihu in this year's annual cycle of Torah readings, I was struck by the extent to which the God who devoured Aaron's sons for offering "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1) is largely absent from feminist imagery. This God, the same who killed Uzzah for putting out his hand to steady the ark (2 Sam. 6:6-7), and who warned the assembled Israelites not to come too close to the base of Sinai lest they die (Exod. 19:12-13), seems to me to point to a profoundly important dimension of human existence. Unless the God who speaks to the feminist experiences of empowerment and connection can also speak to the frightening, destructive, and divisive aspects of our lives, a whole side of existence will be severed from the feminist account of the sacred.

The question of God's ambiguity is not the same as the classical problem of theodicy. Theodicy is a problem only if one accepts a series of propositions about the nature of God, most of which are irrelevant to my own understanding. Theodicy assumes not only that God is perfectly good and all powerful; it assumes that God's omnipotence is that of a person who acts and interacts as supreme ruler of history. According to this view, if God deliberately chooses not to intervene in a particular evil, then either there must be a higher theological explanation, or God must be blamed.

I do not believe in a God who stands outside of history and manipulates it and who therefore can be charged with our moral failures. The stories of Uzzah and Nadab and Abihu seem to me to present a somewhat different problem. Their deaths are not so much an expression of divine injustice as they are of divine unpredictability. These stories confront us not with a choice between God as good or evil but with the irrationality and ambiguity of the sacred. To use Madsen's term, the God of these stories is not "nice." S/he is not neat, sanitized, containable, or controllable. S/he does not easily fit our categories or conform to our expectations. But neither, of course, does the world that God created.

The God of these stories is an ambiguous God—the Goddess as energy of the universe, responsible for life and death and rebirth. S/he is a God who creates forms of startling fragility and beauty and also brings forth monstrosities that frighten and overwhelm us. S/he is the God who makes dry land rise up out of the waters and then washes it away with tidal waves and volcanoes. Creativity by its very nature seems profoundly ambiguous. The power of invention has

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Judith Plaskow teaches religious studies at Manhattan College. She is cofounder and coeditor of the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion.

BOOK REVIEW

Fanny's Choice

David Marc

Funny Woman: The Life and Times of Fanny Brice by Barbara W. Grossman. Indiana University Press, 1991, 287 pp.

From Roseanne Barr's redneck domestic goddess to the Miami/Brooklyn Sicilians played by Bea Arthur and Estelle Getty on *The Golden Girls* to Rhea Perlman's hard-bitten Boston barmaid on *Cheers,* Jewish comic actresses are flourishing on prime-time television these days. But among the variety of sitcom characters they play, there is hardly a Jewish woman in the bunch. To discover an identifiably Jewish female in a title role, a viewer would have to search for reruns of *Rhoda* (CBS, 1974–78), which featured *shiksa*-manquée Valerie Harper as the *nudgediche* window dresser from the Bronx. For an unambiguously Jewish woman playing an unambiguously Jewish woman in the principal role of a sitcom? Try Gertrude Berg as Molly in *The Goldbergs,* a show cancelled in 1954.

Fanny Brice, who was among the most popular burlesque and vaudeville stars in the brief histories of those genres, would have found it hard to crack today's TV market with her best material. Far from veiling her Jewishness, Brice took it right to her audience—whether she was playing on Pitkin Avenue or in downtown Peoria. Her yiddishized impressions ranged from biblical ("Sadie Salome") to Shakespearean ("Juliet Caplan" pining for her Iggy) to contemporary movie stars (she billed herself in one bit as the "Hebrew Theda Bara," despite the fact that Bara, née Goodson, technically qualified for the role herself). *Kvetching* and *krechsing,* mugging and vamping, Brice, a kind of proto-rapper, did not exactly sing, but rather "acted out" her songs. Similarly, she was known for "novelty dances," such as her send-up of goyishe ballerinas in "Becky is Back in the Ballet," and her notorious fan dance, "The Countess Dubinsky," in which a fallen aristocrat strips "right down to her skinsky ... while working for Minsky."

Brice was rich in one essential ingredient of the Jewish gestalt in American popular entertainment: the ability to imaginatively and artistically reshape diaspora *Galut* into a parodic universe infused with the twin spirits of sarcastic mimicry and ebullient participation in secular society. This quality can be found in Jolson's ragtime numbers; in Mickey Katz's renditions of "*Haim Ofen* Range" and "Mein Roiselle from Texas"; in the performances of Lenny Bruce, Alan Sherman, and Kinky Freidman. When Sophie Tucker shook her *tuchis* at an audience, she was celebrating the gift of jazz that Afro-American culture had offered white America (including Jews) as an antidote to Victorian self-repression. But at the same time, she was inviting any anti-Semites in the audience to kiss her ass.

Perhaps such wiseguy ghetto high-jinks loom as a bit too much of a *shanda* (literally, a shame in front of gentiles) for today's suburban alright-niks. After all, the goyim might be offended by such vulgar behavior, causing them to repeal the Bill of Rights—or perhaps even to cut aid for Israel. And would that, as the question goes, be good for the Jews? Which is more embarrassing from behind the wheel of a Volvo—Curley Howard slapping his own face, barking like a dog, and screaming, "woo, woo, woo, woo, woo," or the invasion of Lebanon?

In her biography, Barbara W. Grossman does a remarkable job of retelling Brice's story with the heart and soul—and even at times with the very voice—of a Reform rabbi right out of graduate school pondering such ethereal questions. Devoting an entire chapter to the philosophical dilemma posed by Brice's 1923 nose job, Grossman cannot bring herself to fully condone it. She does, however, construct a remarkable list of the long-term causes behind Fanny's decision to shnip the shnozzola:

> Ethnicity was definitely not fashionable in the 1920s, a decade that began with the ... deportation of suspicious aliens, a decade that witnessed the execution of anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti ... a decade tortured by chauvinism, xenophobia, and racism. The Bolshevik revolution ... and the activities of radicals ... triggered a great "Red scare" and created widespread hostility to foreigners. American disillusionment with the Treaty of Versailles led to an increasingly isolationist foreign policy.... Millions of Americans donned hoods and terrorized minorities in the name of Aryan supremacy ... the noxious Ku Klux Klan reached the peak of its influence in 1924.

Disillusionment with the Treaty of Versailles notwithstanding, Fanny explained her decision to the *New York Times* this way: "No woman on the stage today can afford to have a nose that is likely to keep on growing until she can swallow it." Or perhaps, as

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Dorothy Parker put it, Fanny Brice had simply "cut off her nose to spite her race."

Despite Grossman's need to forgive an errant *sheine maidl* the sin of optional surgery, Fanny's stage act didn't seem to change much in the face of her brand new face. Abbreviated proboscis and all, she continued to appear in the Ziegfeld Follies for the next decade, creating a host of familiarly unassimilated characters: Sadie the Evangelist, a Bible-thumping spoof of Aimee Semple McPherson; Sarah the Bronx nudist, an ideological advocate of free love and canasta; and Modernistic Moe, a send-up of Martha Graham, in which Brice appears in black leotard, with shoulder-length wig, cavorting about the stage, singing, "Mein feet are full of splinters/Dere's vauter on mein knee/A broken down 'shpressionistic dancer/Believe me, dahling, dat's me."

Like Harpo Marx's muteness, Fanny Brice's Yiddish accent was a stage affectation rather than an organic speech condition. Born on the Lower East Side in 1891, Fanny Borach grew up in Newark, speaking the local dialect with local accent, and never learning to speak Yiddish at all. Her parents, Charles and Rose, immigrants from Austria-Hungary, were saloon keepers who owned a succession of beer halls. Rose, however, was both the brains and the brawn behind the operation and, somewhere around the turn of the century, she told her compulsive gambler husband (known in the neighborhood as "Pinochle Charlie") that she had grown tired of waiting the tables *and* keeping the books while he played cards and pondered the ponies. She left him flat, schlepping off with four kids to start anew in Brooklyn.

Fanny's own domestic life did not exactly read like the story of a "Daughter of Israel" in an Abraham Cahan novel either. On one of her first burlesque tours, while still a teenager, she married an Albany barber named Frank White on Valentine's Day, 1910, "because he smelled so good." It didn't last a week. Her liaison with playboy gangster Jules "Nicky" Arnstein endured considerably longer. They moved in together in 1912, and six years later (two of which Nicky spent in Sing Sing) they got around to seeing a rabbi. In this marriage Fanny bore her only two children, a girl and a boy. But with Nicky in constant trouble, she spent much of her time and money trying to keep him out of jail. She filed for divorce in 1927, shortly after Nicky's release from Leavenworth.

Which is more embarrassing from behind the wheel of a Volvo—Curley Howard slapping his own face, barking like a dog, and screaming, "woo, woo, woo, woo, woo," or the invasion of Lebanon?

Fanny made another appearance under the *chupa* in 1929, this time with stage impresario Billy Rose. A flamboyant tabloid personality, Rose had been married more times than Fanny—and as it turned out, he was not exactly ready to settle down into wedded bliss. His well-publicized affair with Olympic swimmer Eleanor Holm (the star of Billy Rose's Aquacade water-show spectacular in 1939) was the last of many straws. Holm was also party to a show-business marriage, to band leader Art Jarrett, and the press had a field day with the infidel couple's flagrant philandering. Rose was proclaimed "Public Heel Number One" by the gossip columnists. "Billy Rose may have the nation's headlines," proclaimed Walter Winchell, "but Fanny Brice has the nation's heart." Fanny filed for divorce in Los Angeles in 1938, never to wed again.

Like most show-business stars of the period, Fanny Brice held hopes of breaking into the movies, where audience sizes—and hence salaries—multiplied astronomically. This, however, was not to be. Dependent upon the visceral reactions of an audience for the timing of her comic gestures, she simply could not adapt to working on a stage without spectators. Her attempts to make it in Hollywood were all unmitigated flops. As early as 1927, Fanny signed a contract with Joseph P. Kennedy to appear in *Clancy's Kosher Wedding,* an *Abie's Irish Rose* knock-off that Kennedy was producing. For murky reasons, she was forced to withdraw from the picture before the shooting began. A year later, she did appear on-screen as the singing star of *My Man,* a Warner Brothers "all talking" musical that had gone into production on the heels of the studio's smash success with Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer.* But *My Man* was an even greater blow to Brice's screen aspirations, closing in a matter of weeks despite an intense publicity campaign mounted by the studio.

In what was perhaps the ultimate slap in the face, Fanny Brice wasn't even asked to audition for the lead part in a film adaptation of her own life story, *Rose of Washington Square.* The 1939 picture, whose cast included Tyrone Power and Al Jolson, starred Alice Faye as a thinly veiled Fanny Brice in "the story of a Ziegfeld star who married a thief...." Fanny angrily sued Twentieth Century Fox but received a settlement of only $30,000, instead of the $750,000 she had demanded. Rather than consider Brice for the role, the studio had reportedly budgeted in legal costs for the project.

"In the theater I was always at ease," she later told biographer Norman Katkov, "but in pictures there was the camera following me around like a cop.... Wherever I looked is that eye staring at me. Like a peeper. Making pictures is like making love in public, you can't be at ease when someone is watching."

And yet Fanny could not go on pounding the boards indefinitely. The booking circuits were shriveling as theaters dropped labor-intensive live entertainment in favor of capital-intensive talking pictures. Her health began to fail under the stress of relentless travel and work. In 1936, at the age of 45, she had a bout with pneumonia that almost killed her.

Though radio had never particularly attracted her before, it turned out to be the medium that would save Fanny Brice's career. With live studio audiences still the rule in commercial broadcasting, radio presented her with none of the problems that had bedeviled her screen efforts. Moreover, she was thrilled at the prospect, as she put it, of reaching "both the hillbillies and the *Haute Monde* at the same time." In retrospect, however, radio also turned out to be the medium that would strip her of the *yiddishkeit* she had carried like a flag back and forth across America for thirty years on the stage.

Fanny Brice broke into radio quite suddenly, the result of a peculiar set of circumstances. In 1938, she signed a contract with MGM in yet another attempt to find a place for herself in Hollywood, appearing in the comic character role of a Russian servant in *Everybody Sing,* a Judy Garland musical. As usual, she left both fans and management unimpressed. But instead of dropping the comedienne outright, the studio tried to minimize its losses by assigning her to work on the *Good News Hour,* an NBC Radio variety show sponsored by MGM in association with Maxwell Coffee. Fanny appeared on the radio series not as "herself," but in the character of Baby Snooks, an obnoxious, whining four-year-old. She would continue to play Baby Snooks—and little else—on radio for the next thirteen years, until her death from a heart attack in 1951.

Throughout her career, Fanny Brice had always done baby impersonations as a regular feature of her act. She had told jokes and sung songs in diapers and little girl frocks since her early burlesque and follies days, in sketches such as "Mrs. Cohen at the Beach" and "Rockaway Baby." Talking baby talk provided a rhythmic break from the *yiddisha* characters that otherwise dominated her repertoire; it also allowed her a certain coy bawdiness behind the mask of childhood innocence: "You know the way they have to go over the script for censorship?" she recalled. "This couldn't happen with a baby. Because what can you write about a child that has to be censored?"

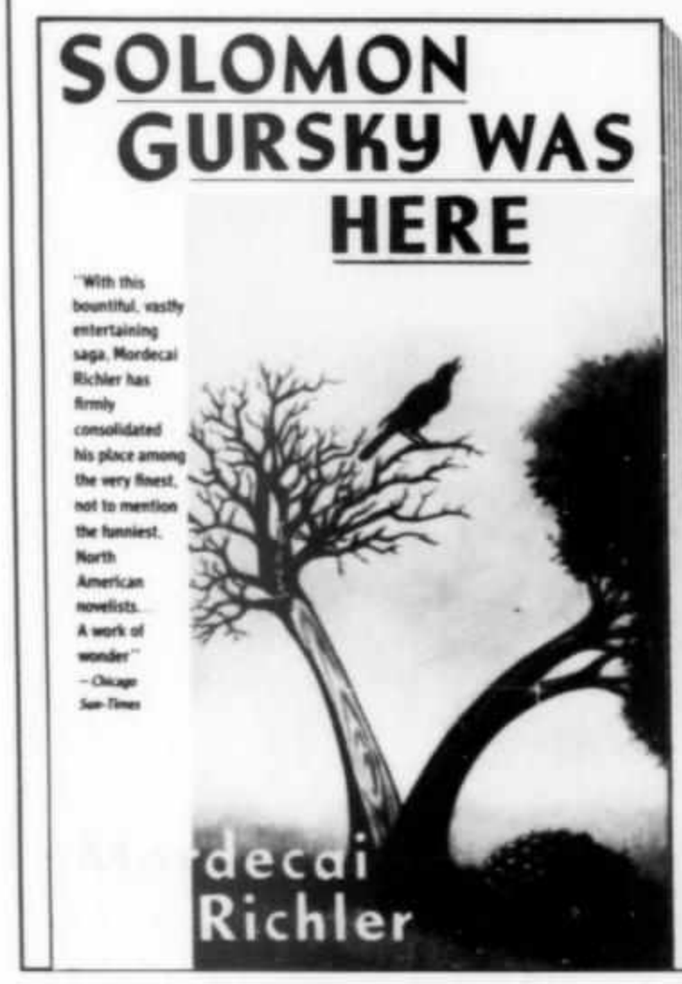
But the popularity of Baby Snooks accomplished what her celebrated nose job of 1923 did not: It signaled the end of Fanny Brice's career as a funky ghetto comedienne. On national radio, as Grossman notes, "Brice learned to avoid profundity and profanity, so as not to offend her increasingly large audience." In a style recognizable to TV sitcom viewers, "the incorrigible child terrorized her household with such stunts as bringing a bees' nest to her mother's club meeting ... and applying stripes of shoe polish to her little brother so he would look like a zebra." Good-bye Modernistic Moe and Sadie the Evangelist ... hello, *Laverne and Shirley.*

The book jacket of *Funny Woman* lists Barbara W. Grossman as a former theater professor who now owns a picture-framing concern. Unfortunately, her book reads as if she were still writing a dissertation. She has a habit of citing sources in mid-sentence as if to make a point of impressing her advisor with the painstaking job of research she has done. This not only makes for unpleasant reading but is quite unnecessary, since the entire book is meticulously footnoted. A fine, even authoritative, reference volume, Grossman's book is not nearly as readable as Norman Katkov's 1953 biography, *The Fabulous Fanny,* which the Brice-Arnstein children commissioned and then promptly pulled off the shelf for its frankness. Nor is it nearly as evocative of the comedienne's vaudeville style as William Wyler's 1968 bio-pic, *Funny Girl,* in which Barbra Streisand interprets Brice's performance at the expense of any concern with historical accuracy.

Buried in the mounds of information that Grossman has compiled is a vein of intriguing issues about the effect of medium upon message, specifically from the point of view of the individual performer. This is an angle to which neither Marshall McLuhan nor his followers or critics has ever given much attention. Was the American vaudeville stage actually a friendly medium for the presentation of minority cultures? Or were Americans during the first third of the twentieth century simply more ready to laugh in public at ethnic stereotypes than they are today? Did network radio—and later television—gradually impose a kind of quality control over American culture that diluted the soul out of ghetto art? Do studio-made performance media—such as movies, recorded music, and videos—tend to exclude a certain type of performer who requires interaction with a live audience? These questions are begged by the peculiarities of Brice's career and are as relevant to the state of Afro-American, Hispanic, and other ethnic cultures as they are to the culture of American Jews. When cable TV was introduced back in the seventies, its purveyors were fond of pointing out how all those new channels would make the aesthetic blunders of three-network television a thing of the past and create new opportunities for minority tastes. So far, however, a glance across the fifty-channel spectrum indicates that the model of Fanny Brice's career still obtains. Shiny new transmission systems tend to serve up greater quantities of homogenized culture, leaving the treasures of pluralism out of sight, out of mind. □

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FILM REVIEW

Growing Up Under Fire: Boyz n the Hood and the Agony of the Black Man in America

Michael Dyson

By now the dramatic decline in black male life has become an unmistakable feature of our cultural landscape—though of course the causes behind the desperate condition of black men date much further back than its recent popular discovery. Every few months, new reports and conferences attempt to explain the poverty, disease, despair, and death that shove black men toward social apocalypse.

If these words appear too severe or hyperbolic, the statistics testify to the trauma. For black men between the ages of 18 and 29, suicide is the leading cause of death. Between 1950 and 1985, the life expectancy for white males increased from 66.5 to 74.6 years, but only from 58 to 65 years for black males.

Between 1973 and 1986, the real earnings of black males between the ages of 18 and 29 fell 31 percent as the percentage of young black males in the workforce plummeted 20 percent. The number of black men who dropped out of the workforce altogether doubled from 13 to 25 percent. By 1989, almost 32 percent of black men between 16 and 19 were unemployed, compared to 16 percent of white men. And while blacks comprise only 12 percent of the nation's population, they make up 48 percent of the country's prisoners, with men accounting for 89 percent of the black prison population. Only 14 percent of the white males who live in large metropolitan areas have been arrested, but the percentage for black males is 51 percent. And while 3 percent of white men have served time in prison, 18 percent of black men have been behind bars.

Most chillingly, black-on-black homicide is the leading cause of death for black males between the ages of 15 and 34. Or to put it another way: "One out of every 21 black American males will be murdered in their lifetime. Most will die at the hands of another black male."

These words appear in stark white print on the dark screen at the beginning of John Singleton's masterful new film, *Boyz n the Hood*. These words are both summary and opening salvo in Singleton's battle to reinterpret and redeem the black male experience. With *Boyz n the Hood,* we have the most brilliantly executed and fully realized portrait of the coming-of-age odyssey that black boys must undertake in the suffocating conditions of urban decay and civic chaos. Singleton's treatment of the various elements of contemporary black urban experience—gang violence, drug addiction, male-female relationships, domestic joys and pains, friendships—is subtle and complex. He layers narrative textures over gritty and compelling visual slices of black culture that show us what it means to come to maturity, or die trying, as a black male.

We have too infrequently understood the black male crisis through coming-of-age narratives, and a set of shared social values that ritualize the black adolescent's passage into adulthood. Such narratives and rites serve a dual function: They lend meaning to childhood experience; and they preserve and transmit black cultural values across the generations. Yet such narratives evoke a state of maturity—rooted in a vital community—that young black men are finding elusive or, all too often, impossible to reach. The conditions of extreme social neglect that besiege urban black communities—in every realm from health care to education to poverty to joblessness—make the black male's passage into adulthood treacherous at best. One of the most tragic symptoms of the young black man's troubled path to maturity is the skewed and strained state of gender relations within the black community. With alarming frequency, black men turn to black women as scapegoats for their oppression, lashing out—often with physical violence—at those closest to them. It is the singular achievement of Singleton's film to redeem the power of the coming-of-age narrative while also adapting it to probe many of the very tensions that erode the foundations of the coming-of-age experience in the black community.

Within this resonant narrative framework, Singleton skillfully presents a stunning vision of black male pain and possibility in a catastrophic environment: South Central Los Angeles. Of course, South Central Los Angeles is an already storied geography in the American social imagination. It has been given cursory—though melodramatic treatment in news anchor Tom Brokaw's glimpse of gangs in a highly publicized 1988 TV special, and has been mythologized in Dennis Hopper's film about gang warfare, *Colors*. Singleton's task in part, therefore, is a filmic demythologization of the reigning tropes, images, and metaphors that have expressed the experience of life in South Central Los Angeles. While gangs are a central part of the urban landscape, they are not its exclusive reality. And though gang

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warfare occupies a looming periphery in Singleton's film, it is not the defining center.

Boyz n the Hood is a painful and powerful look at the lives of black people, mostly male, who live in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in South Central Los Angeles. It is a story of relationships—of kin, friendship, community, love, rejection, contempt, and fear. At the story's heart are three important relationships: a triangular relationship between three boys, whose lives we track to mature adolescence; the relationship between one of the boys and his father; and the relationship between the other two boys and their mother.

Tre (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) is a young boy whose mother, Reva Devereaux (Angela Bassett), in an effort to impose discipline upon him, sends him to live with his father across town. Tre has run afoul of his elementary school teacher for challenging both her authority and her Eurocentric curriculum. And his life in his mother's neighborhood makes it clear why he is not accommodating well to school discipline. By the age of ten, he has already witnessed the yellow police tags that mark the scene of crimes and viewed the blood of a murder victim.

Doughboy (former N.W.A. rapper Ice Cube, in a brilliant cinematic debut) and Ricky (Morris Chestnut) are half-brothers who live with their mother Brenda (Tyra Ferell) across the street from Tre and his father. Brenda is a single black mother—a member of a much-maligned social group that, depending on the amateurish social theory that wins the day, is vilified with charges of promiscuity, judged to be the source of all that is evil in the lives of black children, or at best stereotyped as the helpless beneficiaries of the state. Singleton artfully avoids these caricatures by giving a complex portrait of Brenda, a woman plagued by her own set of demons, but who tries to provide the best living she can for her sons. Even so, Brenda clearly favors Ricky over Doughboy—and this favoritism will bear fatal consequences for both boys. Indeed in Singleton's cinematic worldview both Ricky and Doughboy seem doomed to violent deaths because—unlike Tre—they have no male role models to guide them. This premise embodies one of the film's central tensions—and one of its central limitations. For even as he assigns black men a pivotal role of responsibility for the fate of black boys, he also gives rather uncritical *precedence* to the impact of black men, even in their absence, over the efforts of present and loyal black women who more often prove to be at the head of strong black families.

While this foreshortened view of gender relations within the black community arguably distorts Singleton's cinematic vision, he is nonetheless remarkably perceptive in examining the subtle dynamics of the black family and neighborhood, tracking the differing effects that the boys' siblings, friends, and environment have on them. There is no bland nature-versus-nurture dichotomy here; Singleton is too smart to render life in terms of a pat, social-scientific either/or. His is an Afrocentric world of both/and.

This complex set of interactions—between mother and sons, between father and son, between boys who benefit from paternal wisdom or maternal ambitions, between brothers whose relationship is riven by primordial passions of envy and contempt, between environment and autonomy, between the larger social structure and the smaller but more immediate tensions of domestic life—define the central shape of *Hood.* We see a vision of black life that transcends insular preoccupations with "positive" or "negative" images and instead presents at once the limitations and virtues of black culture.

As a result, Singleton's film offers a plausible perspective on how people make the choices they do—and on how choice itself is not a property of autonomous moral agents acting in an existential vacuum, but rather something that is created and exercised within the interaction of social, psychic, political, and economic forces of everyday experience. Tre's developing relationship with his father, Furious Styles (Larry Fishburne), is by turns troubled and disciplined, sympathetic and compassionate—finely displaying Singleton's open-ended evocation of the meaning of social choice as well as his strong sensitivity to cultural detail. Furious Styles's moniker vibrates with double meaning, a semiotic pairing that allows Singleton to signify in speech what Furious accomplishes in action: a wonderful amalgam of old-school black consciousness, elegance, style, and wit, linked to the hip-hop fetish of "dropping science" (spreading knowledge) and staying well informed about social issues. Only seventeen years Tre's senior, Furious understands Tre's painful boyhood growth and identifies with his teen aspirations. But more than that, he possesses a sincere desire to shape Tre's life according to his own best lights. Furious is the strong presence and wise counselor who will guide Tre through the pitfalls of reaching personal maturity in the chaos of urban childhood—the very sort of presence denied to so many in *Hood,* and in countless black communities throughout the country.

Furious, in other words, embodies the promise of a different conception of black manhood. As a father he is disciplining but loving, firm but humorous, demanding but sympathetic. In him, the black male voice speaks with an authority that might lead one to believe it is strongly supported and valued in American culture, but of course that is not so. The black male voice is rarely heard without the inflections of race and class domination that distort its power in the home and community, mute its call for basic respect and common dignity, or amplify its ironic denial of the very principles of democracy and equality that it has publicly championed in pulpits and political organizations.

Among the most impressive achievements of Singleton's film is its portrayal of the neighborhood as a *community.* In this vein Singleton implicitly sides with the communitarian critique of liberal moral autonomy and atomistic individualism. In *Hood,* people love and worry over one another, even if the expression of such sentiments sometimes fails to preserve life or sustain hope. But Singleton understands that communities also reflect the despotic will of their fringe citizens who threaten the civic pieties by which communities are sustained. *Hood*'s community is fraught with mortal danger, its cords of love and friendship under the siege of gang violence, and by what sociologist Mike Davis calls the "political economy of crack." Many inner-city communities live under what may be called a "juvenocracy": the economic rule and illegal tyranny exercised by young black men over significant territory in the black urban center. In the social geography

of South Central L.A., neighborhoods are reconceived as spheres of expansion where urban space is carved up according to implicit agreements, explicit arrangements, or lethal conflicts between warring factions. Thus, in addition to being isolated from the recognition and rewards of the dominant culture, inner-city communities are cut off from sources of moral authority and legitimate work, as underground political economies reward consenting children and teens with quick cash, faster cars, and sometimes, still more rapid death.

We see a vision of black life that transcends insular preoccupations with "positive" or "negative" images and instead presents at once the limitations and virtues of black culture.

Such conditions rob the neighborhood of one of its basic social functions and defining characteristics: the cultivation of a self-determined privacy in which residents can establish and preserve their identities. Police helicopters constantly zoom overhead in *Hood*'s community, a mobile metaphor of the ominous surveillance and scrutiny to which so much of poor black life is increasingly subjected. The helicopter also signals another tragedy, which *Hood* alludes to throughout its narrative: Ghetto residents often must flip a coin to distinguish Los Angeles' police from its criminals. After all, this is Darryl Gates's L.A.P.D., and the recent Rodney King incident only underscores a long tradition of extreme measures that police have used to control crime and patrol neighborhoods.

Furious's efforts to raise his son in these conditions of closely surveilled social anarchy reveal the galaxy of ambivalence that surrounds a conscientious, community-minded brother who wants the best for his family, but who also understands the social realities that shape the lives of black men. Furious's urban cosmology is three-tiered: at the immediate level, the brute problems of survival are refracted through the lens of black manhood; at the abstract level, large social forces such as gentrification and the military's recruitment of black male talent undermine the black man's role in the community; at the intermediate level, police brutality contends with the ongoing terror of gang violence.

Amid these hostile conditions, Furious is still able to instruct Tre in the rules of personal conduct and to teach him respect for his community, even as he schools him in how to survive. Furious says to Tre, "I know you think I'm hard on you. I'm trying to teach you how to be responsible. Your friends across the street don't have anybody to show them how to do that. You gon' see how they end up, too." His comment, despite its implicit self-satisfaction and sexism (Ricky and Doughboy, after all, do have their mother Brenda), is meant to reveal the privilege of a young boy learning to face life under the shadow of fatherly love and discipline.

While Tre is being instructed by Furious, Ricky and Doughboy receive varying degrees of support and affirmation from Brenda. Ricky and Doughboy have different fathers, both of whom are conspicuously absent. In Doughboy's case, however, his father is symbolically present in that peculiar way that damns the offspring for their resemblance in spirit or body to the despised, departed father. The child becomes the vicarious sacrifice for the absent father, though he can never atone for the father's sins. Doughboy learns to see himself through his mother's eyes, her words ironically recreating Doughboy in the image of his invisible father. "You ain't shit," she says. "You just like yo' Daddy. You don't do shit, and you never gonna amount to shit." Brenda is caught in a paradox of parenthood, made dizzy and stunned by a vicious cycle of parental love reinforcing attractive qualities in the "good" and obedient child, while the frustration with the "bad" child reinforces his behavior. Brenda chooses to save one child by sacrificing the other—Sophie's choice in the ghetto. She fusses *over* Ricky; she fusses *at* Doughboy. When a scout for USC's football team visits Ricky, Brenda can barely conceal her pride. When the scout leaves, she tells Ricky, "I always knew you would amount to something."

In light of Doughboy's later disposition toward women, we see the developing deformations of misogyny. Here Singleton is on tough and touchy ground, linking the origins of Doughboy's misogyny to maternal mistreatment and neglect. Doughboy's misogyny is clearly the elaboration of a brooding and extended ressentiment, a deeply festering wound to his pride that infects his relationships with every woman he encounters. In one revealing exchange with his girlfriend, Doughboy is challenged to explain why he refers to women exclusively as "bitch, or 'ho, or hootchie." In trying to reply, Doughboy is reduced to the inarticulate hostility (feebly masquerading as humor) that characterizes misogyny in general: "'cause that's what you are."

But while Singleton's female characters do not have center stage, by no means do they suffer male effrontery in silent complicity. When Furious and Reva meet at a trendy restaurant to discuss the possibility of Tre returning to live with his mother, Furious says, "I know you wanna play the mommy and all that, but it's time to let go." He reminds her that Tre is old enough to make his own decisions, that he is no longer a little boy because "that time has passed, sweetheart, you missed it." Furious then gets up to fetch a pack of cigarettes as if to punctuate his self-satisfied and triumphant speech, but Tre's mother demands that he sit down. As the camera draws close to her face, she subtly choreographs a black woman's grab-you-by-the-collar-and-set-you-straight demeanor.

> It's my turn to talk. Of course you took in your son, my son, our son and you taught him what he needed to be a man, I'll give you that, because most men ain't man enough to do what you did. But that gives you no reason, do you hear me, no reason to tell me that I can't be a mother to my son. What you did is no different from what mothers have been doing from the beginning of time. It's just too bad more brothers won't do the same. But don't think you special. Maybe cute, but not special. Drink your café au lait. It's on me.

But while Singleton ably avoids flat stereotypical portraits of his female characters, taking care not to render them as mawkish or cartoonish, he is less successful in challenging the logic that at least implicitly blames single black women for the plight of black children. In Singleton's filmic vision, it is not institutions like the church that save Tre, but a heroic individual—his father Furious. But this leaves out far too much of the picture. What about the high rates of black female joblessness, the sexist job market which continues to pay women at a rate that is seventy percent of the male wage for comparable work, the further devaluation of the "pink collar" by lower rates of medical insurance and other work-related benefits—all of which severely compromise the ability of single black mothers to effectively rear their children? It is the absence of much more than a male role model and the strength he symbolizes that makes the life of a growing boy difficult and treacherous in communities such as South Central L.A. The film's focus on Furious's heroic individualism fails, moreover, to fully account for the social and cultural forces that prevent more black men from being present in the home in the first place. Singleton's powerful message, that more black men must be responsible and present in the home to teach their sons how to become men, must not be reduced to the notion that those families devoid of black men are necessarily deficient and ineffective. Neither should Singleton's critical insights into the way that many black men are denied the privilege to rear their sons be collapsed into the notion that all black men who are present in their families will produce healthy, well-adjusted black men. So many clarifications and conditions must be added to the premise that *only* black men can rear healthy black men, that it dies the death of a thousand qualifications.

In reality, Singleton's film works off the propulsive energies that fuel deep, and often insufficiently understood, tensions between black men and black women. A good deal of pain infuses relations between black men and women, recently dramatized by the publication of Shaharazad Ali's infamous and controversial underground bestseller, *The Blackman's Guide To Understanding the Blackwoman*. The book, which counsels black women to be submissive to black men, and which endorses black male violence toward women under specific circumstances, touched off a furious debate that drew forth the many unresolved personal, social, and domestic tensions between black men and women. This pain follows a weary pattern of gender relations that has privileged concerns defined by black men over feminist or womanist issues. Thus, during the civil-rights movement, feminist and womanist questions were perennially deferred, so that precious attention would not be diverted from racial oppression and the achievement of liberation. But this deference to issues of racial freedom is a permanent pattern in black male-female relations; womanist and feminist movements continue to exist on the fringe of black communities.

Equally as unfortunate, many contemporary approaches to the black male crisis have established a rank hierarchy that suggests that the plight of black men is infinitely more lethal, and hence more important, than the conditions of black women. The necessary and urgent focus on the plight of black men, however, must not come at the expense of understanding its relationship to the circumstances of black women.

At places, Singleton is able to subtly embody a healthy and redemptive vision of black male-female relations. For instance, after Tre has been verbally abused and physically threatened by police brutality, he seeks sanctuary at the house of his girlfriend Brandi (Nia Long). As Tre breaks down in tears, he and Brandi finally achieve an authentic moment of spiritual union and erotic consummation previously denied them by the complications of peer pressure and religious restraint. Brandi is able to express an unfettered and spontaneous affection that is not a simplistic "sex-as-proof-of-love" that reigns in many teen worldviews. Brandi's mature intimacy is at once the expression of her evolving womanhood and a vindication of the wisdom of her previous restraint. Tre is able at once to act out his rage and demonstrate his vulnerability to Brandi, thereby arguably achieving a synthesis of male and female responses, and humanizing the crisis of the black male in a way that none of his other relationships—even his relationship with his father—are able to do. It is a pivotal moment in the development of a politics of alternative black masculinity that prizes the strength of surrender and cherishes the embrace of a healing tenderness.

As the boys mature into young men, their respective strengths are enhanced, and their weaknesses exposed. The deepening tensions between Ricky and Doughboy break out into violence when a petty argument over who will run an errand for Ricky's girlfriend provokes a fistfight. After Tre tries unsuccessfully to stop the fight, Brenda runs out of the house, divides the two boys, slaps Doughboy in the face and checks Ricky's condition. "What you slap me for?" Doughboy repeatedly asks her after Ricky and Tre go off to the store. She doesn't answer, but her choice, again, is clear. Its effect on Doughboy is clearer still.

Such everyday variations on the question of choice are, again, central to the world Singleton depicts in *Hood*. Singleton obviously understands that people are lodged between social structure and personal fortune, between luck and ambition. He brings a nuanced understanding of choice to each character's large and small acts of valor, courage, and integrity that reveal what contemporary moral philosophers call virtue. But they often miss what Singleton understands: Character is not only structured by the choices we make, but by the range of choices we have to choose from—choices for which individuals alone are not responsible.

Singleton focuses his lens on the devastating results of the choices made by *Hood*'s characters, for themselves and for others. *Hood* presents a chain of choices, a community defined in part by the labyrinthine array of choices made and the consequences borne, to which others must then choose to respond. But Singleton does not portray a blind fatalism or a mechanistic determinism; instead he displays a sturdy realism that shows how communities affect their own lives, and how their lives are shaped by personal and impersonal forces. Brenda's choice to favor Ricky may not have been completely her own—all the messages of society say that the good, obedient child, especially in the ghetto, is the one to nurture and help—but it resulted in Doughboy's envy of Ricky, which contributed to his anger,

alienation, and gradual drift into gang violence. Ironically and tragically, this constellation of choices may have contributed to Ricky's violent death when he is shot by members of a rival gang as he and Tre return from the local store.

Ricky's death, in turn, sets in motion another chain of choices and consequences. Doughboy feels he has no choice but to pursue his brother's killer, becoming a more vigilant keeper to his brother in Ricky's death than he could be while Ricky lived. Tre, too, chooses to join Doughboy, thereby repudiating everything his father taught, and forswearing every virtue he has been trained to observe. When he grabs his father's gun, but is met at the door by Furious, the collision between training and instinct is dramatized on Tre's face, wrenched in anguish and tears. Though Furious convinces Tre to relinquish the gun, his victory is only temporary. The meaning of Tre's manhood is at stake; it is the most severe test he has faced, and he chooses to sneak out of the house to join Doughboy. Then, sometime during the night, Tre's impassioned choice finally rings false, a product of the logic of vengeance he has desperately avoided all these years; he insists that he be let out of Doughboy's car before they find Ricky's killers.

Following the code of male honor, Doughboy kills his brother's killers. But the next morning, in a conversation with Tre, he is not so sure of violence's mastering logic anymore, and says that he understands Tre's choice to forsake Doughboy's vigilante mission, even as he silently understands that he is in too deep to be able to learn any other language of survival. Across this chasm of violence and anguish, the two surviving friends are able to extend a final gesture of understanding. As Doughboy laments the loss of his brother, Tre offers him the bittersweet consolation that "you got one more brother left."

Their final embrace in the film's closing moment is a sign of a deep love that binds brothers; a love that, however, too often will not save brothers. The film's epilogue tells us that Doughboy is murdered two weeks later, presumably to avenge the deaths of Ricky's killers. The epilogue also tells us that Tre and Brandi manage to escape South Central; Tre pursues an education at Morehouse College, while Brandi goes to neighboring Spelman. It is testimony to the power of Singleton's vision that Tre's escape is no callow Hollywood paean to the triumph of the human spirit (or, as some reviewers have somewhat perversely described the film, "life-affirming"). The viewer is not permitted to forget for a moment the absurd and vicious predictability of the loss of life in South Central Los Angeles, a hurt so colossal that even Doughboy must ask: "If there was a God, why he let motherfuckers get smoked every night?" Singleton is not about to provide a slick or easy answer. But he does powerfully juxtapose such questions alongside the sources of hope, sustained in the heroic sacrifice of everyday people who want their children's lives to be better. The work of John Singleton embodies such hope by reminding us that South Central Los Angeles, by the sheer power of discipline and love, sends children to college, even as its self-destructive rage sends them to the grave. □

BOOK REVIEW

A New World Order at Home

Fred Block

The End of Laissez-Faire: National Purpose and the Global Economy after the Cold War by Robert Kuttner. Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, 304 pp.

The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism by Robert B. Reich. Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, 331 pp.

Experts trying to puzzle out the U.S. economy are often likened to the five blind men of legend, all of whom touched different parts of the elephant and then reached quite divergent conclusions about the nature of the beast. But the metaphor has to be brought up to date; while the sightless are exploring the animal, messages come over various loudspeakers offering misleading information. One speaker continually warns people to be careful of the reptiles, while another describes the different types of trees in this particular section of the forest. An updating of the parable is necessary because so much routine reporting about the economy is simply wrong or—and this includes some of the most important economic data provided by the government—profoundly misleading.

We are told, for example, that one of our key economic problems is that Americans do not save enough; the rate of personal saving, as measured by the Commerce Department, fell sharply during the 1980s. If ordinary Americans would just exercise more restraint in running up their credit card balances, surely General Motors could raise the cash to out-compete Toyota. In reality, however, the capacity to accumulate personal savings has always been heavily concentrated in a relatively small percentage of upper-income earners: the top 20 percent of the population who control 80 percent of the wealth.

We also know that Reagan's policies redistributed income from the poor to the rich, so that the top 20 percent commanded an expanding share of personal income over the past decade. If the personal savings data are correct,

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the logical result should be a torrent of national rage against the bloated rich whose response to Reagan's generosity was to engage in a consumption binge of heroic proportions. This, however, is not the conclusion reached by mainstream economists and politicians in both parties who bemoan the shortage of saving.

The point is that the rich in the 1980s consumed a great deal *and* they continued to accumulate financial and real assets at a rapid pace. Due to the intricacies of national income accounting, which measures saving only indirectly, official reports fail to capture these substantial increases in wealth.

Both Robert Kuttner and Robert Reich realize the need to tear away such layers of misconceptions, which systematically distort our perceptions of the economy. Each book decries the falseness of conventional economic wisdom and insists on moving beyond outmoded thinking. Unfortunately, it is all too common to be caught by the very snares one denounces.

Kuttner and Reich collaborate on the liberal journal *The American Prospect,* and they basically favor the same economic reforms. Both authors talk of increasing the progressivity of the tax system and of shifting spending from military to civilian purposes. The newly available revenues could then be used to invest in developing the skills of the population and to rebuild our rotting infrastructure. Both decry the stupidity of Reaganite "deregulation," which led to the savings-and-loan disaster, and they share an anguish about the deepening racial and class divisions of U.S. society. But they reach their conclusions by following very different paths.

Robert Reich used to be a prominent advocate of "industrial policy"—deliberate government actions to help U.S. firms be more competitive in the world economy. In this book, he has modified his position substantially. The point, he argues, is not to help U.S.-based multinationals make more money than their Japanese-based counterparts, but rather to assure that global corporations, regardless of their origins, will locate key value-adding activities within the borders of the U.S. He maintains that the development of complex global networks of cooperating firms makes it inappropriate to continue to identify the national interest with that of national corporations. To put it most crudely, if Toyota will put up new production facilities in Kentucky, it doesn't really matter if Chrysler goes under.

If U.S. executives can only compete in the world market by breaking unions, why did executives in other countries not face the same imperative?

Reich sees the tendency toward global business networks as irreversible, so that any kind of protectionist response would be foolhardy. At the same time, he bemoans the negative consequences of international competition. Many U.S. workers have suffered because of their inability to compete with low-wage producers abroad. However, the top 20 percent of income earners, a group that Reich calls "symbolic analysts"—scientists, engineers, management consultants, culture producers, and bond salespeople—have gained from internationalization because their services are highly prized on the world market.

Reich eloquently shows that upper-income groups in the U.S. are, in effect, seceding from the rest of the country. He persuasively describes the tendencies toward privatization that withdraw the resources and energy of the rich from the larger community. However, his analysis runs into a dilemma:

> America's problem is that while some Americans are adding substantial value, most are not. In consequence, the gap between those few in the first group and everyone else is widening. To improve the economic position of the bottom four-fifths will require that the fortunate fifth share its wealth and invest in the wealth-creating capacities of other Americans. Yet as the top becomes ever more tightly linked to the global economy, it has less of a stake in the performance and potential of its less fortunate compatriots.

Reich's only solution is to make moral appeals to the "symbolic analysts," begging them to support his political program in the name of a common national identity. But even he seems doubtful that such pleas will be effective.

Fortunately, Reich's dilemma is a largely imaginary one. He has been swayed by one of those deceiving voices on the loudspeaker; he has accepted the Right's argument that the distribution of income in the U.S. reflects the invisible hand rewarding people in exact proportion to their contribution to the global economy. But, in reality, growing income inequality is not due to the international market; it can be traced to a series of domestic decisions that have more to do with power than efficiency. Corporate CEOs in the U.S. decided to raise their own salaries to levels far above those of comparable executives in Japan or Germany. And some of the worst imbalances in income can be traced to the attack on American trade unions during the 1980s. But there was no ferocious labor-bashing in Japan, France, or Germany. If U.S. executives can only compete in the world market by breaking unions, why did executives in other countries not face the same imperative?

Reich's confusion about the causes of income distribution reflects three more fundamental flaws in his argument. First, his understanding of the growing economic importance of knowledge and information is elitist. He is so preoccupied with yuppie "symbolic analysts" that he fails to see that the capacity to solve problems has also become important in a broad range of working-class and lower middle-class occupations. In fact, the superiority of Japanese production methods can be traced, in large part, to their emphasis on improving the problem-solving skills of line workers. Reich does refer briefly to this, but his more general strategy is to dismiss all these people as "routine workers." If Reich had instead explored the dependence of all of us—including symbolic analysts—on the increased skills of ordinary workers, he could have provided a solid rationale for investing in the capacities of the entire population.

Second, Reich's account of the new international corporate networks is naive. He is certainly correct to question the easy identification of the national interest with the interest of U.S.-based corporations, but he

doesn't really grasp the Japanese challenge. In one section, he argues that when foreigners buy up U.S. technologies—either through licenses or by taking over research-intensive firms—such acquisitions still leave us with the ability to develop new inventions. But wealth creation increasingly depends on the ability to transform new technologies into new products. If the U.S. were to specialize in technological breakthroughs while the Japanese focused on implementation, the U.S. would lose out and ultimately the Japanese would also be doing the innovating themselves.

Finally, Reich seems to believe that the way the world economy is *currently* organized is both rational and inevitable. Here, Kuttner's book presents a refreshing alternative. Kuttner sees the basic structures of the world economy not as immutable fixtures but as dynamic entities that can and should be changed. He understands, moreover, that we live in a world *political* economy, not the pure market beloved by economic theorists. The ways in which goods, services, and capital move across national boundaries are inevitably shaped by a wide range of state decisions.

Kuttner's core argument is that U.S. policymakers have been crippled by their adherence to an obsolete laissez-faire ideology built around the fantasy of a self-regulating international market. To keep such a market functioning requires a high level of state intervention to keep private financial institutions out of trouble, to manage relations among currencies, and to iron out the inevitable conflicts between nations over international trade. Instead of facing these pressing tasks, U.S. policy fluctuates between abstract adherence to laissez-faire principles and ad hoc violations of those principles—violations that are often counterproductive. For example, Kuttner details the Pentagon's elaborate controls over non-military exports to Soviet-bloc countries, limits that ended up costing U.S. firms millions in legitimate sales.

In a brilliant chapter, Kuttner shows that the intellectual foundation for the U.S. commitment to free trade has completely eroded. The venerable theory of comparative advantage, which is supposed to explain why we sell lumber to Japan and they sell autos to us, assumes that "industries will automatically be located where they can be most efficiently operated." But even some neoclassical economists now recognize that the location of manufacturing "comes about ... partly because of historical accidents, partly because of cumulative learning and niche positions, and partly because of deliberate policies." Ideal "free trade" is impossible; a whole range of government actions—some unavoidable and others avoidable but desirable—will influence a country's trading fortunes. Kuttner argues that we have to move beyond debating the false dualism of "free trade" vs. "protectionism" and develop the proper institutional arrangements for managing trade at both the national and international levels.

Kuttner makes a powerful case for conscious and deliberate industrial policy. He thinks it is futile for us to keep trying to get the Japanese to "open up their economy." The U.S. needs instead to emulate the Japanese in using government to encourage and facilitate the process of economic and technological development. Kuttner cogently addresses Reich's point about identifying the national interest with that of U.S. corporations. He writes:

> The solution is, to be sure, not sentimental attachment to American managers simply because they are nominally our countrymen. As American citizens, our affection for them—as for foreign-owned firms—should be conditional: what are they bringing to the American economy and its work force? That, in turn, requires a functioning social contract anchored in a coherent set of public policies and a competent public sector.

While Reich exaggerates the current domestic costs of international competition, Kuttner points out that, over the long term, international laissez-faire will destroy our quality of life. The most obvious example is environmental. If firms are allowed to shift production to those countries with the most lax pollution rules, then citizens elsewhere will have to choose either unemployment or ecological degradation. The obvious alternative is to make such transfers contingent on achieving strict international standards of environmental protection.

But if Kuttner's domestic program depends on reform of the world economy, is it any more realistic than Reich's moral exhortations to yuppies? The answer, I think, is yes. The U.S. has been unique in its dedication to the principles of laissez-faire. Third World nations have suffered enormously from present international financial arrangements, and they have strong incentives to back Kuttner's agenda of changes that would include debt relief and a relaxation of the strict guidelines required for aid that have been imposed by the IMF. In addition, the European Community and the Japanese strongly prefer managed international trade over the libertarian U.S. version. They have also been victims of the existing world monetary system, which has allowed the U.S. an extraordinary freedom of action in managing its economy. Balancing all these conflicting interests will not be easy, but were the U.S. to abandon its commitment to laissez-faire, the broad outline of a set of compromise arrangements is already apparent.

Ultimately, as Kuttner recognizes, both domestic and international reform are integrally linked to the scope of U.S. global ambitions. During the war in the Persian Gulf, both advocates and opponents suggested we were fighting for cheap oil and to defend our standard of living. The reality is that Bush's vision of a new world order enforced by U.S. military power is an alternative to a process of domestic reform that would improve the standard of living of most Americans. In a word, we were fighting to preserve our decaying cities, our underdeveloped welfare state, and our declining competitiveness in international trade.

On the other hand, if the U.S. could envision a genuinely new world economic order, if it were to reconcile itself to being one of a number of powerful nations that cooperatively negotiate the terms of international trade, rather than the seat of a global empire, then it could drastically reduce its military spending, negotiate a new international financial and trading order, and begin a process of serious domestic renewal. The alternative is to continue pursuing world hegemony through military and political means, thus guaranteeing the economic decline and mounting misery at home. □

BOOK REVIEW

Travels with Dinesh

Maurice Isserman

Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus by Dinesh D'Souza. Free Press, 1991, 319 pp.

In the spring of 1921, Vice President Calvin Coolidge, writing in a popular magazine, warned that "under a cloak ... of academic freedom," radicalism was infecting women's colleges. Coolidge drew on damning quotes from student newspapers at Smith, Barnard, Bryn Mawr, and other imperiled institutions. At Wellesley, philosophy professor Mary Calkins ("she is said to have voted for Debs for President in the recent election") had stated that the American flag should stand "for nothing wholly and separately American," but should instead represent "the highest spiritual ideals of truth, righteousness, and brotherhood." That, Coolidge declared grimly, was "the creed of Internationalism." Adherence to such radical notions, the vice president concluded, "means the ultimate breaking down of the old sturdy virtues of manhood and womanhood, the insidious destruction of character, the weakening of the moral fiber of the individual, the destruction of the foundations of civilization."

Those who read Dinesh D'Souza's best-selling *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus,* may think that little has changed in the last seventy years. D'Souza and his research assistants have assembled a mountain of anecdotal evidence establishing that, once again, all that decent people hold sacred is at risk from "self-styled revolutionaries." An academic revolution, "conducted in the name of those who suffer from the effects of Western colonialism ... as well as race and gender discrimination in America," has taken place in universities. The triumphant insurgents—a coalition of Marxists, feminists, gay activists, and minorities—"inhabit the offices of presidents, provosts, deans, and other administrators." In the long run, they hope to use the university as a "birthplace and testing ground" for the "fundamental restructuring" of the entire society. In the short run, they have already done much to destroy "the highest ideals of liberal education, and with them the enlightenment and understanding which hold out the only prospects for racial harmony, social justice, and minority advancement." (For a discussion of the wider issues in the "PC" debate touched off by critics such as D'Souza, see the special focus section of *Tikkun,* July/August 1991.)

Calvin Coolidge, for his part, was no crusader. He devoted little energy to the Red Scare. Upon succeeding Harding as president, "Silent Cal" preferred an afternoon nap in the White House to matters of state. There's no chance that D'Souza will ever be nicknamed "Silent Dinesh." Former *Dartmouth Review* editor and Reagan aide, now installed at the American Enterprise Institute, the energetic D'Souza has become an inescapable media presence. But he has written a book whose intellectual laziness is of Coolidgean proportions.

In the fervid imagination of the American Right, the Left always seems on the brink of seizing control of academia. In the fanciful drawing illustrating Coolidge's article, a pipe-smoking radical wolf draped in an ill-fitting woolen pelt lectured to a room full of note-taking sheep. And yet, like the fairy-tale wolf who winds up in a pot of boiling soup, the Left has historically been the victim in confrontations over the politics of academia.

D'Souza quotes Donald Kagan, the outspoken conservative dean of arts and sciences at Yale, on the dangers of "political correctness": "I was a student during the days of McCarthy," Kagan recalled, "and there is less freedom now than there was then." If the "McCarthyism of the Left" of the 1990s is worse than the Red Scare of the 1950s, then things must be bad indeed. In the original McCarthy era, thousands of people lost their livelihoods and reputations. Faculty members were dragged before congressional and state investigating committees. Loyalty oaths were required as a condition of employment on many campuses. The House Un-American Activities Committee scrutinized college and high school reading lists for evidence of ideological deviation. The FBI prowled through libraries, keeping tabs on who was checking out the forbidden Marxist classics. Tenured faculty members were fired from such institutions as the University of Michigan, the University of Washington, UC Berkeley and UCLA, Rutgers University, and New York University.

And how do things compare today? How many conservative (or, non-"politically correct") professors have been fired in mid-contract in these even-more-repressive times? a) One hundred? b) A dozen? c) One? d) Less than one? If you chose "d)" you answered correctly.

D'Souza's book describes a number of recent instances where professors have come under attack for allegedly exhibiting racist or sexist insensitivity

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During his freshman orientation in 1968 Maurice Isserman was required to read Milton Friedman's Capitalism and Freedom, *but managed to survive the experience with his political preconceptions intact. He now teaches American history at Hamilton College. His most recent book, cowritten with Dorothy Healey, is* Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party *(Oxford, 1990).*

in the classroom. Some of the incidents D'Souza describes certainly deserve condemnation. At Harvard, historian Stephan Thernstrom was taken to task by several students for, among other things, quoting in class the justification for slavery offered in antebellum Southern plantation journals. Still, this isn't the same thing as being fired and blacklisted for one's beliefs. McCarthyism cost its victims more than bruised feelings. Given Harvard's record in these matters, it's safe to say that if Thernstrom had been accused of being a Communist in the 1950s and had not displayed the appropriate remorse and willingness to inform on his friends, he would have lost his job and most likely, his career as well.

The "Political Correctness" Scare of the early 1990s is less a reflection of the political slant on American campuses than it is of the triumph of the Right virtually everywhere else in American society. George Bush's May commencement address at Michigan, defending "free speech," and against "political correctness," may prove an ominous portent. Coming from the man who attacked his opponent in the 1988 race as a "card-carrying member of the ACLU," this sudden solicitude for the Bill of Rights invites some skepticism. In the absence of more formidable foes, "political correctness" is shaping up as a stand-in for the "evil empire" of the early eighties and the Willie Horton campaign of 1988.

The theme meshes nicely with the Right's long-standing campaign of sixties-bashing. Consider the demographic determinism that underlies D'Souza's explanation for the emergence of the "victim's revolution" on campus:

> Older, traditionally liberal professors are retiring and making way for a new generation, weaned on the assorted ideologies of the late 1960s.... These younger professors are now the bellwethers of the victim's revolution. Already their influence is dominant; soon they will entirely displace the old guard.

Gross overgeneralization is a standard D'Souzaism. Sixties radicals will "soon ... entirely displace the old guard." In what schools? In what departments? D'Souza can make a case for black studies and women's studies (although here the radicals usually *are* the "old guard"). There are plenty of radicals (or at least disciples of deconstruction, which D'Souza takes for the same thing) in departments of English. I've also encountered a Marxist and a feminist or two in the various history departments I've passed through. But where else are sixties-vintage leftists "displacing the old guard"? Outside of some pockets of influence, radicals are not well established in economics, sociology, philosophy, or political science, not to mention the natural sciences. In schools of management, I suspect, there may well be a hegemonic "political correctness," but not of the kind that concerns D'Souza.

To the extent that radicals have achieved influence in the academy, they owe it largely to those free market forces that conservatives are supposed to revere. While others lined up to earn M.B.A.s and law degrees, radicals chose to pursue Ph.D.s in the financially unremunerative fields of English and history. If that means conservatives don't like the resolutions passed by the Modern Language Association these days, they have no one to blame but themselves.

D'Souza's usual line of attack is to find one or two genuine examples of a trend he decries, and then pile on irrelevant detail which, given the proper spin, can be made to appear ridiculous, ominous, or both. He relates, for example, how feminists have attempted to reform the language of the university, discarding "freshman" for "first-year student," "chairman" for "chairperson," etc. True enough. Then he continues, dryly, "Yale historian Howard Lamar says that his course on 'Cowboys and Indians' should now be called 'Cowpersons and native Americans.'" How absurd, we are invited to think.

Have things really gone so far? Well, in reality, no. "Cowboys and Indians" is the informal name Yale students have long attached to the course. Professor Lamar's announcement wasn't intended seriously, as D'Souza could have discovered if he'd taken the trouble to read through the Yale catalogue, where the two-part course remains listed as "The American West to 1850" and "The American West since 1850." For all his evident amusement at the follies of his opponents, D'Souza seems remarkably incapable of recognizing a joke when he sees one.*

The heart of D'Souza's book is the chapter he devotes to Stanford's experiment with "multiculturalism" in its required freshman core curriculum. This is an issue that includes the Right's favorite bugaboos: craven administrators capitulating to radical professors pressing a political agenda, the collapse of academic standards as ill-prepared minority students are coddled with anti-Western gut courses, even a walk-on appearance by Jesse Jackson. The Stanford case achieved widespread notoriety among conservatives, with much of the hostile commentary centering on a campus rally (the one Jackson attended) where students chanted "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Culture's got to go!" These are, in fact, the very first words in D'Souza's chapter, although he neglects to mention that the students were referring to "Western Culture," the course, rather than the culture itself.

D'Souza entitles the chapter "Travels with Rigoberta," after the text that to his mind "best reveals the premises underlying the new Stanford curriculum." *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* is a work of oral history sometimes assigned in the sequence of required courses called "Cultures, Ideas, and Values" (CIV) that, in 1989, replaced the former Western Culture core curriculum. In her oral history, recorded by a French feminist, Rigoberta tells of her conversion to the revolutionary cause in Guatemala. It's bad enough, D'Souza maintains, that students are reading this book in place of one or another of the great books of Western culture; worse, D'Souza argues, Rigoberta's tale "embodies a projection of Marxist and feminist views onto South American Indian culture ... a mouthpiece for a sophisticated left-wing critique of Western society." Once again, D'Souza

*An etymological digression: In one of his regular Sunday columns on language in the *New York Times,* conservative columnist William Safire believed he had traced the earliest use of the phrase "political correctness" to 1975, when National Organization for Women president Karen DeCrow said, apparently in earnest, that NOW was moving in a "politically correct direction." But Safire is mistaken. I recall the phrase being used at least five years earlier in the ideologically suspect circles I then travelled in. It was always used in a tone mocking the pieties of our own insular political counterculture, as in, "We *could* stop at McDonald's down the road if you're hungry," or "we *could* spend good money to get the television fixed," etc.—"but it wouldn't be politically correct." The irony is that the Left's own in-joke has been appropriated by the Right to bludgeon the Left for, among other things, its supposed humorlessness.

views the recent changes darkly through a demographic prism:

> Younger faculty had their own reasons for disliking the western core curriculum.... Philosophy professor John Perry said the classics were an "albatross" around the neck of the new generation of professors.

And again, D'Souza oversimplifies. Perry himself isn't a part of that younger generation, having received his Ph.D. in 1968 and arrived at Stanford in 1974. In fact, Perry chaired the committee that, in 1978, set up the Western Culture core curriculum of which D'Souza is so enamored. Whatever its merits, Western Culture was not a course with a long tradition at Stanford (it replaced a Western civilization course that had been offered for a number of decades in the history department). Nor was it ever intended as a traditional "great books" course; even in 1978, Perry's committee recommended that books by minorities and women be incorporated in its syllabus, though none were. The point of the course was to engage students with primary texts, not to establish some sort of rigid hierarchical listing of the great works.

Nor was the new CIV course entirely different from the old Western culture course, since many of the classics remained on the list of assigned books. For all the uproar over the creation of the CIV course, Stanford is, in fact, one of the few universities today retaining any kind of core curriculum. Euripides, Shakespeare, and Freud are among the authors whose works are required reading within CIV, whereas in most universities it is possible to get an undergraduate diploma without having to read any of them. And *I, Rigoberta,* despite the prominence given it in D'Souza's account, is read by the students in only *one* of the eight tracks in CIV: If its presence on the reading list is evidence of "political indoctrination," then only about an eighth of CIV's annual enrollment of 1,600 freshmen can be counted among the victims.

The key exhibit in D'Souza's indictment of "multiculturalism" is his interview with a young black woman named Megan Maxwell, who recently graduated from Stanford. She and D'Souza argued over the wisdom of the recent changes in the Western Culture curriculum:

> In her own major, American history, Maxwell pointed out that she benefited from reading about the voices of slaves and oppressed people in this country.... But while Maxwell was appropriately severe on Western culture, which enslaved blacks, why did she seem so upbeat about African culture, which sold Maxwell's ancestors into lifelong slavery?

D'Souza informed her that blacks were also involved in the enslavement of their fellow Africans.

> Maxwell became very quiet and did not say anything for several seconds. She now seemed aware of the implications of the term *slave trade*.... Isn't an equal share of guilt borne by the black seller of slaves, the tribal chieftains.... Maxwell reluctantly conceded that if blame was to be assigned, it must be distributed fairly.

Finding Maxwell's "lack of objectivity about African slavery ... surprising for one so intelligent," D'Souza blames her professors for assigning her the wrong books, noting for example that Professor Clayborne Carson includes Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* ("a Marxist analysis which downplays and even distorts African involvement in the slave trade") on a list of suggested readings. While D'Souza faults professors for the books they choose to assign in class, he seems not to have read many of them. Witness his contrast of Martin Luther King, Jr., "a homegrown American who formulated his rhetoric in classic American terms," with Malcolm X, "a native of the Caribbean who rejected the Western tradition altogether." Malcolm's Caribbean origins will come as news to readers of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* and to the residents of Lansing, Michigan and Roxbury, Massachusetts, Malcolm's hometowns.

In any event, the personal saga of Megan Maxwell comes to a happy ending. D'Souza reports that, at the conclusion of their conversation, Maxwell showed "new reservations about 'African American' as a term of self-description.... 'I prefer to call myself a black American.'"

One fascinating element of *Illiberal Education* is the number of pages devoted to the unfolding of D'Souza's cult of personality. Throughout his forays into such hostile territories as Stanford, Harvard, and Duke, D'Souza portrays himself as truth-bearer, uniquely suited by his wit, his conservative insights, and his Third World origins (he first came to the United States from India as a high-school exchange student) to puncture radical myths and strip bare the self-serving hypocrisy of political correctness. For the average undergraduate, it seems, one conversation with the man is apparently enough to undo four years of radical brainwashing. That's why he questioned Megan Maxwell so closely about her knowledge of the slave trade, commonly regarded as the original sin in white America's relations with people of color abroad and at home.

I called up Megan Maxwell and got a rather different story. "Interview," she said, was too exalted a term for their interaction. D'Souza approached her while she was cashing a check in the Stanford student union and asked if they could talk about the Western Culture controversy. Maxwell's appearance as the centerpiece of D'Souza's chapter on the changes in the Stanford curriculum was thus determined by the fact that she was a) black, and b) available; otherwise she wasn't the most representative figure he could have chosen.

The fact is that Maxwell (who, from our conversation, seems every bit as intelligent as D'Souza suggests) had never even taken a course at Stanford dealing with the African slave trade. She hadn't read Walter Rodney's book on the subject: it was never assigned to her. Her famous moment of "quiet," she told me in our phone conversation, did not reflect any sudden conversion to D'Souza's view on guilt and the slave trade, but instead registered her realization that she had begun talking about a subject with which she had only a passing acquaintance. Whatever the deficiencies in her education (and there's no more reason to expect every black student will be an expert on the African slave trade then to expect every Jewish student to be up on the latest scholarship on the Holocaust), they were not the product of Stanford's "multiculturalism." When Megan Maxwell arrived at Stanford as a freshman, Western Culture was still

the required course; CIV had not yet been instituted. In short, she is not now, nor has she ever been a reader of *I, Rigoberta Menchu*. And she asked me to point out that her reservations about calling herself "African American" had nothing to do with ten minutes of casual conversation with Dinesh D'Souza; she had always referred to herself as a "black American."

As a serious examination of the issues confronting higher education today, D'Souza's book has about as much to recommend it as Calvin Coolidge's "Are the 'Reds' Stalking our College Women?" But the success of *Illiberal Education* is worth pondering. There are many Americans who are prepared to believe the worst about the universities. Some of this ill will reflects traditional anti-intellectualism. Some of it has been cynically whipped up by right-wing cadres like D'Souza, who have discovered that posing as defenders of liberal education against the specter of "political correctness" works better than the kind of crude frontal assault on the academic Left epitomized by the *Dartmouth Review*.

But the Left is not blameless for this assault. While the tyranny of "political correctness" is more myth than reality, the academic Left does have its share of zealots, careerists, and would-be commissars who lend plausiblity to the myth. And at a time when radicals of any persuasion have little ability to affect events off-campus, many have succumbed to the temptation to create a separate utopian community within the university. Debates over the canon, free speech, affirmative action, even the wording of catalogue copy, have often come to replace meaningful engagement with the real political world. The symbolic weight attached to campus-centered concerns inflates their importance and leads to the demonizing of opponents. Good people (and even good radicals) can be found on both sides of many of these issues: Certainly Irving Howe's concerns about "the canon" and Nat Hentoff's concerns about restraints on "hate speech" deserve serious consideration. Even D'Souza, to give the devil his due, has a few useful points to make, such as the suggestion that affirmative action in college admissions be linked to lower socioeconomic background, rather than to race.

Far from hoping for the disappearance of "political correctness," the Right would love nothing more than to see the Left continue to embrace a self-absorbed politics of identity, sensitivity, and special-interest infighting. Should McCarthyism return to the campuses, I expect it will be of the usual right-wing variety, rounding up the usual left-wing suspects. A broad, tolerant, and democratic Left will have a chance of surviving the attack; a Left mired in self-righteousness and symbolic politics is likely to find itself back in the soup again. □

BOOK REVIEW

Languages of the Witnesses

Michael Heller

Catwalk and Overpass by Dennis Silk. Viking Press, 1990, 100 pp.

The function of an art such as poetry, suggested Walter Benjamin, is to transform historical content into something like truth. For Benjamin, literary works were "hieroglyphs of redeemed life," rescuing individuals and even whole epochs from the darknesses of chronological time. Such a project of redemption strikes me as central to the new work of Dennis Silk, an Israeli poet writing in English, whose subject is the immediate crisis of the Middle East. His poems powerfully arrest the spectacle of historic time. Reading this, his third book, one overhears the resonant musics of prophecy, knowledge, and even hope.

English-born but living in Israel since 1955, Silk writes marvelously ironic poems in a kind of embattled English, an English encircled by his adopted country's cultures and troubles, an arena of conflict that he calls the "insult space" of contemporary Israel. For Silk, this "space" is something of a linguistic nightmare, a series of tragicomic bad dreams compounded of the self's private musings, the voices of other cultures, new settlers and their political designs, and the strident rhetoric of the state. His poetics, aimed at the Israeli body politic, its ministers of defense, and its ministers of culture, are as much social and functional as aesthetic. "As a hunter cleans his gun," he writes, "I bend over language."

Silk relates himself ambivalently to the physical and mental map of present-day Israel. Referring to himself as a "fumbler in street maps," one who is "toppling learnedly" into the country's social morass, Silk's poetry attempts to tread the "catwalk" of his title, inviting its readers to somersault with him into the war zones of Israeli and Palestinian life. The poems, alternately comic and raging, are a kind of search for moral balance. For Silk, it is not a matter so much of what side to

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In the Builded Place, Michael Heller's latest book of poetry, was published in 1990 by Coffeehouse Press. He teaches at New York University.

take (that is quite clear), as of how to present accurately the dilemmas of the society he's immersed in.

Silk situates himself metaphorically on "an upward homing / loop" where he can listen to the clash of words from which hope and fear are fashioned. Silk is an opportunist as well as appreciator of the rich overhearings and borrowings of Israeli life; his enemies are the "simplifiers" and "literalists" who would reduce Israel to a monochrome of inhabitants, a single language, or one religion. Against these cultural purists, Silk marshals an army of puns, neologisms, tales from the Arabic and Coptic, biblicalisms, Americanisms, borrowings from European high culture and Yiddish. Using open verse techniques, rhyme, and an epigrammatic mode, Silk stirs seriousness, fury, and humor into the pieties and bathos of daily speech. He incorporates this multinational word hoard into a kind of counterlanguage, employing it in wildly quirky and biting prose poems. These works take advantage of prose's capaciousness and freer rhythms, allowing Silk's language to embark on disorienting metaphysical flights and groundings.

In the section of the book that deals with the Occupied Territories and the intifada, "Stingy Kids," this prose-poem form mirrors the absurd contradictions of what Silk calls "the situation." At times, the result is hilarious social satire: In "Vanishing Trick" the invention of "invisibility powder," rubbed "into the skin of a million Ahmeds" solves Israel's demographic problem (an ever increasing Arab population), while enabling the state to retain its sources of cheap, if now unseen, exploitable labor.

The prose-poem form serves much more complicated uses as well. Take for instance the poem "On the Way to the Territories":

> We're passing a suburb of redemption on the left, the saved like these barrack affairs. They have broody rectangular dreams above which they hang a flag of their disposition.
>
> The more romantic plant Swiss chalets guarded by bemused militia. Here they yodel a psalm, there they mensurate it in a barrack.
>
> From her twilight hilltop, Brunhilde mopes at a palisade. A mawkish cement mixer woos a Siegfried moon.
>
> Happiness hides behind the hills. Gun-happiness in holster or from a sling or hip. Cowboy.
>
> Under the film-lot moon I ride a horse-laugh: it is not a war-horse unless a laugh is an act of war.

This sublunary landscape is spun not of rocks and trees, but of the cloth of present-day attitudes: the overblown, manufactured corruptions of settler life; the machismo directed toward the Palestinians (the redskins of the region), which mimics the frontier mentality of the American cowboy. Further, Silk lets us hear, in the painful and yet curiously delicious invocations of the Bible by the pious, how the "saved" residing in their "suburb of redemption" need self-defensively to reinvent themselves.

Silk's Israel is a calculus of oxymorons, of "militiarabbis" and "temple-plotters," caught in webs of self-righteousness and naked greed, who must use the vocabularies of the sacred for profane, debased ends. In the face of such massive and pervasive self-deceptions, Silk's poetic engine is the "horse-laugh," the ridiculing barb that rends language's veil, preserving sanity against the closed mind, against all forms of officialese and the day-to-day barbarities committed in its name.

Silk registers the effect on the poet when bureaucratic language, culturally polyglot and deaf to its own endemic political abuse, becomes the coin of the realm. "Wreckers" captures a society no longer in control of either its own mentality or its language, where the poet, denied the social function of eloquence, is reduced to a raving Isaiah:

> A nightshift of thieves crowbar out the cornerstone, and slick down a something quarried and cut in the Territories. A hundred grinning men in green berets shore the building up, till the new something is talked into place.

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> To conclude this event, the untidy
> sybil of redemption prophesies in
> hysterical hexameters.

For Silk, the "something" that can't be openly named, such as territorial expansion or elimination of the Palestinians, is "talked into place" by the abused language of officials and rhetoric mongers. And yet Silk is by no means simply a satirist-observer. For him, the "catwalks" and "overpasses" of his title offer vantage but also the pathos of distance and guilt. Among the more moving and complex themes of the book is Silk's reminder to himself and the reader that his muse, as he hints in "The Boatwoman," is a kind of "loan-word asking much of us," that one has to think of oneself and the muse as "double," as involved in endless self-reflexiveness reaching for some imagined Jerusalem of moral certainty.

Being "double" means that notions of homeland and homelessness are complicated. Silk meditates on this theme throughout the book, nowhere more movingly than in "In Memoriam," where he writes of "Mohammed Scaeb / descendant of emirs and nomads / suicide / because he had no country" who

> didn't know
> to free
> the song
> of his dispersion.

The book's more occasional poems, reflections on friends and colleagues or on lovers, meditations on paintings and other art, are also colored by distances as much psychological as geographical. Dislocation becomes a way of knowing and of relating, as in the last stanza of "Landing":

> It is between towns
> I like best or, slantwise to the grid,
> to have the courage of a left hand
> snatching away the right's
> handshake.

Paradoxically, in poem after poem Silk enjoins his own dispersion. Dispersion, above all else, seems to give him the psychic distance necessary to clarify his themes. Fearing the mindsets and premature closures of the zealots, he writes, "To be provincial is death."

The ethical longing of these poems—deeply at odds with the prevalent statism of Silk's adopted region of hell—is a "notion of a temple *in vacuo,*" a spiritual rather than literal Holy Land. "Take me away," he writes at the end of this powerful and loving book,

> to that knifethin mountain air
> and I will pick an apple
> that isn't there.

Silk's poems, part joke, part screed, part spiritual search, are like the little slips of paper inserted in the cracks of the Wailing Wall. Perhaps they communicate beyond the wailing mountain of today's Israel, for Silk too wants an apple of a state that isn't there. □

Psychotherapy Without Men

(Continued from p. 12)

This process bespeaks a greater bifurcation in our social lives along gender lines. The traditional division of labor—men identified with the public sphere and women with a devalued private life—has been eroded to some degree by women's greater labor-force participation since World War II, and by the changes in consciousness brought about by the feminist movement. Nonetheless, these changes have taken place against the backdrop of a labor force still segregated on the basis of gender. And this segregation continues to fall along predictable lines: Women numerically dominate occupations that can be seen as extensions of their traditional roles within the family. Nursing, social work, waitressing, school teaching and day care, to name only a few, continue to be bastions of female employment. The new addition of psychotherapy to this litany robs society of an institution in which men traditionally have worked with emotions, tolerating and becoming immersed in the intimate and messy problems people experience on a day-to-day basis. Men's abandonment of psychotherapy as a profession confirms the idea, nurtured in our troubled families, that if one is hurting inside, if one is depressed or anxious, it is a woman's job to fix it. And because it is increasingly a woman's job, the social forces that already denigrate mental health care undoubtedly will find further excuse to undervalue and underfund psychotherapy in the future. □

B'Tselem Report

(Continued from p. 14)

didn't leave; they were expelled. We went into the villages and said "Get out." And they got out. Yes, it's important for me and others that this state be a democratic one, but you still have to consider the difference between ourselves and the other countries and remember that democracy is not a value in itself but rather an instrument. Zionism takes precedence over everything. If a group like B'Tselem had been around when Israel was being established, a Jewish state would not have come into being.

Rabbi Menahem Pruman (one of the founders of Gush Emunim and rabbi of Tekoa, a settlement in the Etzion Bloc on the West Bank): The intifada is connected with wholesale murders of Arabs by Arabs too, as well as attacks on Jews, and it has to be fought resolutely. But that doesn't mean that things such as the incidents documented in the B'Tselem report should be happening. Even in war there are ethics, unlike the philosophy that says, "It's a war, so let's be warlike." In this matter, I agree neither with the Right nor with the Left. Some people on the Right say, "We're at war; anything goes." The Left says that any war, any struggle, has got to have the worst possible consequences, so let's separate ourselves from the problem and partition the peoples.

I say that the struggle against Arab violence has to be waged and has to go on, and that anyone who doesn't fight this violence has chosen evil. The Nazis couldn't be fought with smiles, and so much has already been said about those people whose exalted pacifistic ideals led to World War II. Noble ideas and ideals can lead us to the greatest of catastrophes. But the struggle against intifada violence is also a struggle against the violence of certain interrogators. It's the same struggle: the struggle against evil.

Benny Begin (MK from Likud): I haven't read the latest B'Tselem report yet. I find it very hard to make judgments about its veracity; I tend to regard these reports as one-sided. I don't think one should or can ignore them, but you don't have to accept the testimonies at face value either. Neither do I think that the state prosecutor and the army have been indifferent to illegalities.

When the Landau report was published, I took exception to the permission it gave to use "moderate physical contact." I think it desirable that the cabinet, the next time it discusses the subject, rescind the guideline permitting "moderate physical contact." There'll always be one government between the Jordan River and the sea, and that's the Israeli government. It's a great privilege, which comes with a great duty: the duty to ensure the well-being of everyone who lives here.

The Right usually seems rather indifferent to the B'Tselem reports.

The first reports triggered some protests. Here we're speaking about the sixth report, something like that. How often can you repeat the same things? What's more, no one suspects B'Tselem of being an objective institution. It's a political body with a "name tag" and I assume this affects people's attitudes toward the report.

Naomi Blumenthal (Chair of the Liberal Women's Organizations Department of the Likud; Chair of the Political Team of the Israel Women's Lobby): I read the report. I find it hard to believe that these reports are reliable. These things may be going on as a marginal, exceptional kind of phenomenon.

So the possibility that the G.S.S. may be breaking the law doesn't bother you?

When you hear about Argentina under the colonel's regime, it gives you a bad feeling. On the other hand, the Arab side here is doing things that are hard to stomach. For example, when you think about the man who's willing to murder you out of a religious fanaticism. Of course, I'd prefer to see a less brutal reality on our side, and I'd be happier if we didn't have to reach situations like these.

Does brutality by Arabs justify torture in interrogations?

You have to judge each issue on its own merit. When you recall those factory workers who came to work in the morning, and someone who'd worked with them for years simply butchered them, what torture compares with this slaughter? That's the issue at hand. Our self-criticism is fierce enough, harsh enough. I don't believe we're capable of reaching a state of systematic brutality—brutality for brutality's sake.

Because the Israelis are different from the Argentinians?

Because the Israelis are basically very humane. I don't want to sound like a racist, but we absorb more than our share of values. I'm furious at the B'Tselem people. Let them check out the Arabs' systems, give them grades, and publicize it around the world. We're victims of international media, victims of our assailants, and victims of ourselves.

Minister of Justice Dan Meridor: This report, unlike others we've received in matters like these, was forwarded for examination in the manner prescribed by the Landau report. Unfortunately, that's all I can say at the moment. The complaints are grave; they are accusations that are either true or false, and the response has to be well founded.

The Right has an image of being less concerned about human rights.

There's an image like that; it's warped and fundamentally groundless. Human rights are not a monopoly of the Left. I think there are lots of people on the Left who aren't concerned about human rights; it's strictly a political issue for them. The constitution of the Herut movement, today's Likud, starts out with a statement that alludes both to the integrity of the homeland and to a liberal perception of man, freedom of expression, and human rights.

But isn't it true that your movement has members who give Zionism priority over democracy?

What's Zionism? The Zionism of the revisionist movement aimed to create a Jewish majority in Eretz Yisrael. Why bother with a majority if you don't need democracy?

Perhaps the problem is that the authorities' response to human rights irregularities is too soft?

What's soft about their behavior? Is there a country in the world that has outlawed a political party? To this day I'm blamed for having outlawed [Rabbi Meir Kahane's] Kach Party, and I'm delighted to accept the blame. America hasn't outlawed the Ku Klux Klan. Neo-Nazis operate in Germany. □

The B'Tselem report is available from B'Tselem, 18 Keren Hayesod Street, Jerusalem 92149, Israel.

HAREDIM

(Continued from p. 22)

Still, he noted, it must be admitted that Jews fashion themselves "to be the enemies of all men." Further: "We find in them only an ignorant and barbarous people, who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched." These being the facts, Europeans must ever beware the Jews, even as they tolerate them.

Post-Enlightenment literature is filled with statements that echo Voltaire. Johann Fichte saw in the Jews "a powerful, hostilely disposed nation ... infiltrating almost every country in Europe." Jakob Friedrich Fries observed that Jews "shy away from industrious occupations not because they are hindered from pursuing them, but simply because they do not want to." Hartwig Von Hunt-Radowsky characterized the Jews as "a class of morally and spiritually degenerate people, whom we shelter and who have benefited from the state but never benefit it at all." Wagner, a veritable treasure trove of Jew-hating prose, remarked on the "disagreeably foreign" appearance of Jews. Wilhelm Marr lamented that "there is no stopping ... Jewry's control of society and politics." None of these comments is extraordinary in the least. A life's work awaits the scholar who sets out to compile the authoritative anthology of the anti-Semitic remarks of the post-Enlightenment, European intelligentsia.

Despite the vastness of this body of literature, the image of the Jew that emerges from it is relatively simple. It is the image of enormously powerful, Machiavellian manipulators, interested in advancing only their own odd, insular, debauched, money-mad clan. It is, in short, the same as the secular Israeli view of the Harid.

This should come as no surprise; the secular Israeli image was patterned (albeit indirectly) after the Enlightenment version of anti-Semitism. "Creating a new Jew" was among the most loudly trumpeted desiderata of Zionists of many different stripes; it was often the only slogan that could be uttered ingenuously by factions on all sides of the multiple ideological schisms of the day. This desideratum was not entirely new, either; it had been formulated earlier by the Maskilim of the Jewish Enlightenment, who hoped to bring about a wholesale transformation of Jews and Judaism. To the Zionists, as to the Maskilim, a *new* Jew was necessary, because the *old* Jew was pathetic and lamentable. This old Jew—the figure to be transcended, superseded—was, as often as not, drawn directly from a stock bestiary of social types. The image of the pitiful and degraded Jew (a counterweight essential to the rhetorical balance of so much early Zionist polemic) was in large part borrowed, and even plagiarized intact, from post-Enlightenment European intellectuals. In the hands of Zionist publicists—as in the hands of some Haskala publicists before them—the image of the *Altjude* was refined (Voltaire's *Juif* and Fichte's *Jude* vested increasingly in the garb of the *Ostjude*—that crass, ne'er-do-well relation suffered by the Jews of the West with self-conscious embarrassment), but it did not change fundamentally.

One need not search hard to find denigrating images of the *Altjude* in Zionist rhetoric and pamphletry. Herzl had already noted in 1894 that Jews had "taken on a number of antisocial characteristics" in the ghettos of Europe, and that Jewish character was "damaged." Frishman opined that "[traditional] Jewish life is a dog's life that evokes disgust." Brenner likened Jews to "filthy dogs, inhuman, wounded dogs." Gordon wrote that European Jews were parasites. Berdyczewski christened

traditional Jews "spiritual slaves, men whose natural forces had dried up and whose relation to the world was no longer normal," and elsewhere, "a non-people, a non-nation—non-men, indeed."

In some instances, Zionist invective was trained against all *galut* Jews—religious and atheist alike, ghetto and assimilated alike, Western Jews and *Ostjuden* alike. But the most violent rhetoric was often reserved for the religious. Berdyczewski fashioned the slogan, "Yavneh and Jerusalem are enemies" to capture the fundamental antagonism between the old religious Jews and the new national Jews. The former "led us into exile"; their culture "cannot live together with the national culture which wants to break the thread of exile and plant within us new values and a totally new will."

Other Zionists, less thoughtful than Berdyczewski, were more vindictive. Samuel Joseph Ish-Horowitz declared that "the Jew must negate his Judaism before he can be redeemed." Judaism, conceived as traditional Halacha, was too much of an ethical liability to be compatible with moral *redemption,* whatever that was. Marcus Ehrenpreis was even less charitable to halachic Judaism:

> We have liberated ourselves from the shackles of a sickly, rotten, and dying tradition! A tradition that cannot live and does not want to die; a tradition that manacled our hands, blinded our eyes, and confounded our hearts, that darkened our heavens and banished light and beauty and tenderness and pleasantness from our lives, that turned our youth into old men and our elders into shadows. We have liberated ourselves from the excessive spirituality of the Exile.... We have liberated ourselves from the rabbinic culture, which confined us in a cage of laws and restrictions.

Such displays of rationalist scorn were quite common in Zionist circles. A leitmotif of much secular Zionist prose is the yearning for *normalcy.* Normalcy, of course, is in the eye of the beholder; to most secular Zionists, normalcy meant achieving a close match to one or another of the leading European social theories of the day. Thus, the distaste that these Zionists felt for the Old Jew overlaps with the post-Enlightenment antipathy for Jews, precisely because their world views overlapped with so much of post-Enlightenment European thought. That Herzl—whose vision of the Jewish state described in his utopian *Altneuland* bears more than a passing resemblance to European parlor society—adopted a rather standard bourgeois critique of European Jewry is no surprise. Neither is it odd that Gordon, whose own world view was so deeply influenced by Tolstoy, should develop a Tolstoyan critique of *Luftmenschlich,* urban Jewish sensibilities.

But the enmity that some Zionists felt for traditional Judaism was more than an intellectual inheritance from the European social movements that inspired and informed their ideologies. The image of the old Jew that they borrowed and restyled was also *useful,* the perfect foil for the New Jew the Zionists were so energetically constructing. The Old Jew was the "before" picture, ever juxtaposed to the robust "after" Jew of the Zionists. "This is what you were," Zionists would remind their adherents, "and this is what you would still be, were it not for Zionism." The Old Jew provided an obvious justification, and raison d'être, for the Zionist project.

The Zionist caricature of the Old Jew is what still lies behind many of the secular attitudes toward Haredim. The Haredim are Old Jews par excellence, and their present-day opposition still draws freely from the Jew-hating genre. This Zionist legacy explains why Haredim are by their very nature an affront to many secular Israelis. The unabashed Haredi presence in Israeli politics contradicts the secular Zionist supposition that the Old Jew would simply disappear with the advent of the manifestly superior New Jew. Further, the fact that Haredim attract *Hozrim BeTshuvah*—New Jews refashioning themselves as Old Jews—is a painful reminder that the "after" picture of the early Zionist imagination is not an unambiguous improvement over the "before" picture. The net effect is a challenge to the Zionist vision, and to Zionist achievements.

But there is more. As the secular Zionist enterprise tires, as it musters less of a positive vision of society, the counterweight of the Haredim as a justification for Zionism becomes more important. Early Zionists expected that they would be vindicated, that the value and truth of the ideology they embraced would be confirmed by the society they built. After Zionists produced the Good Society, they reasoned, no one would doubt that Zionism itself was a social good. Today, however, it is obvious that the Zionists established an exceedingly imperfect society; Zionism's social achievements alone are not enough to justify the ideology. This being so, it is now more important than ever to prove that, at the very least, the Jew the Zionist styled is superior to the Jew that came before. And one good way to do this is to prove that traditional Jews—those unmodified by Zionism—are degraded and debauched. Thus, the less secure secular Zionists feel in their achievements, the greater their need to deride the Old Jew or his modern proxy, the Harid.

Advanced secular insecurity, and exhaustion, were obvious in the wake of Rav Shach's speech last March. When negotiations and infighting over the formation of a government were at their most furious, Shach—the

head of the Punivitch Yeshiva and spiritual leader of the Degel Torah and Shas party—addressed a convention of tens of thousands of Haredi men. The gathering filled Yad Eliyahu, Israel's biggest indoor sports arena, to overflowing, in part because everyone expected the Rav to give the Degel Torah party's two members of Knesset marching orders, commanding them to join with either the Labor party or the Likud. Shach's references to party politics were oblique; chiefly he seized upon the occasion as an opportunity to attack secular Israel, particularly the kibbutzim. "There are kibbutzim," he lamented, "that don't even know what Yom Kippur, Shabbat, and Mikveh are. They raise rabbits and pigs." Shach argued further that the kibbutzim, like the rest of secular Israeli society, were morally bankrupt, excelling only in fighting and shows of brute strength. But brute strength was no replacement for values, for spirit.

Shach's speech, which was carried live on prime-time Israeli television, unleashed unprecedented and nearly univocal secular fury. Members of RATZ led the counterattack with a statement to the effect that, per capita, more kibbutznikim died defending Israel than did any other sector of the society. Who was Shach to denigrate their achievements, especially when his kind refused to serve in the army at all? Over the next days, all of the country's secular papers devoted hundreds of column inches to the heroism of kibbutznikim, and to their superlative contributions in each of Israel's wars. A week passed before anyone seemed to realize that to invoke military achievements was in fact to support Shach's assertion that secular Jews know only from force. Kobi Niv noted this in an op-ed in *Al Hamishmar* a week and a half after the speech:

> [Shach's] central claim was ... that seculars and kibbutznikim have no values except for territory and strength. As an ostensible response, seculars say, "How dare you talk about us that way? After all, it is we who fight and defend our homeland in blood." This argument actually confirms what the Rabbi said.

Niv, though, was convinced that there was a better answer. He concludes that the value of the seculars is that they are *not* Haredim. Shach and his ilk, he writes, represent "the dark ages, misanthropy, oppression of the spirit, oppression of women, oppression of humanity, narrow-mindedness, narrow horizons, the past." The secular has freed himself from that ugly legacy. Haim Hefer adopted a similar approach in a doggerel published in *Yediot* called "The Haredi Intifada." "Their petrol bombs [are] filled with sermons and extortion and manipulation." This secular sense of dignity issues from having overcome the weakness of character so obvious in the Haredim.

Secular Israelis may hate the Haredim, but we need them. In fact, we need to hate them. We need Haredim to serve as representatives of the Old Jew, at once antipathetic and pathetic, that Zionism has renovated. We need Haredim as living proof of Zionist achievements, as a breathing moral missing link that shows just how far we have evolved. Haredim serve as a token of the continued relevance of the secular Zionist program. And at the end of the twentieth century, this claim to relevance is no longer as self-evident as it was even half a generation ago. But unlike the more confident earlier pronouncements on the obsolescence of the Old Jew, the current fascination with the ugly Harid—part fact, part fantasy—is bleak testimony to the weariness of the secular Zionist vision. □

Cold War

(Continued from p. 46)

The scientists at Livermore modified the cold-war narrative so as to achieve another paradoxical refinement of its worldview: It now cites the disarmament anticipated in the wake of the Eastern Bloc's collapse as the rationale for another generation of weapons. As our Livermore informant explained, while discussing the START II arms reduction negotiations, the multiple-warhead, high-accuracy missiles developed by the Laboratory over the last twenty years would be destabilizing in small numbers because they "put too many warheads in too few baskets," thus tempting the other side to strike first.

> It's clear that the nuclear weapons we have today are not the nuclear weapons you want if the nuclear stockpile is reduced by a factor of, you name it, two, four, six, ten. If you're interested in factor-of-four cuts, then ... we're talking about replacing 25 percent of the stockpile we have today over a period of ten or fifteen years.

The narrative still says we need new weapons to maintain stability—but now in the service of disarmament, rather than of containing communism.

The narrators have also introduced a new character, the Third World. Again, the testimony of our Livermore manager captured the essence of the new scenario:

> I've always thought the threat of a war with the Soviets in Central Europe was overemphasized. That's reliving World War II and not thinking about what might be the real source of the next world war, and the Iraq situation today is a prime

example of the kind of situation we should have been considering.

In a similar vein, a Laboratory administrator told me, "I think we should go ahead with new types of neutron bombs. We need new types of tactical weapons that would be designed for a war in the Middle East or somewhere like that." Dan Quayle, stumping for the Laboratory, had this to say:

> As the cold war comes to an end, the free world may be less burdened with fighting communist aggression. But there's a new evil: lawlessness and terrorism.... Iraq and other regional powers are gaining ballistic missile capability. That's why the president thinks strategic defense makes more sense in the 1990s than ever before.

In such statements, the Third World stands in for the beleaguered evil empire as an icon of lawlessness and danger, an absolute Other which defines American virtue by contrast. In a lawless world, one villain can easily be replaced by another.

Finally, the narrative has also been altered to deflect a successful breakthrough in the critique of nuclear weapons. In 1990, the *Washington Post* revealed that severe design flaws in the W-79 artillery shell and the W-69 Short Range Attack Missile (SRAM) could have led to the accidental explosion of these weapons in peacetime. The U.S. was so concerned that it secretly withdrew its W-79 artillery shells from Germany last year. The Department of Energy also confirmed recently that negligent production procedures at the Hanford plutonium reactor, the Rocky Flats nuclear trigger factory, and the Savannah River tritium facility have endangered the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Managers and scientists at the Livermore Laboratory say that these revelations show the need not so much for rapid disarmament, as for a new generation of weapons without the design flaws of the old ones. Some are also suggesting the development of a "green bomb"—a nuclear weapon assembled using new processes that would not endanger the environment. These arguments are currently being considered by the federal Departments of Energy and Defense.

Clearly the cold-war narrative has proven astonishingly resilient. If the old weapons were safe, then it is safe to build new weapons. If the old weapons were unsafe, then it is imperative that we build new ones. If the Soviets are weak and divided, arms reductions still require new weapons. And if it isn't the Soviets, it will soon be someone else. Again, E.P. Thompson's observations during the darker days of the cold war proved prescient. The players in the conflict, Thompson writes,

> are trapped within the enclosed circularity of their own self-validating logic. Every conclusion is entailed within the theory's premises, although a finely wrought filigree of logic may be spun between one and the other.

The cold-war narrative is, in its tautological gracefulness, reminiscent of what Sacvan Bercovitch has called the American jeremiad. According to Bercovitch, the old Puritan jeremiads—angry sermons exhorting the colonial believers to live up to their role as the new people of Israel—provide America's foundational narrative. The jeremiad reminds us that Americans are an imperfect but chosen people, destined one day to create a utopian world. Within the terms of this narrative, sin and imperfection are already accounted for as the inevitable failings of a people called finally to succeed, once they suffer atonement for their earthly misdeeds. Thus critique slides into revitalization: Any exposure of America's failings is always already accounted for by the ideal that is America. As Bercovitch observes, the jeremiad establishes a "search for meaning [that] is at once endless and self-enclosed."

The cold-war narrative is simultaneously utopian and despairing about human nature, and it mixes a faith in the redemptive power of technology with an American sense of manifest destiny that is paradoxically reinforced by our government's crimes and failures. By adhering firmly to the belief that America, both morally and technologically, is a chosen nation, the cold-war narrative extends the myth of American exceptionalism—the conviction that America is a country apart, blessed with vast territories and tremendous wealth as part of its historical mission to redeem the fallen nations of the world. The myth of American exceptionalism runs throughout the country's history, from the Puritan settlement of New England, to the settlement of the frontier, to the nation's rise to global empire. And by joining an obsession with human sinfulness together with a transcendent quest for a never-realized perfection, the cold-war narrative preserves, in a curiously postmodern way, a quasi-Calvinist and deeply American sense of the human condition.

The cold-war narrative helped pull the United States into a war with Iraq and has been revitalized by that war. Government officials and journalists have encouraged us to understand the Gulf War in terms that are familiar as themes from the narrative: America's unique responsibility to eradicate evil in a dangerous world; U.S. technological superiority as a sign of grace; military deployments as a prelude to a new age of harmony; and an American mission to ensure "stability." And Saddam Hussein's genuinely evil conduct during the war has resonated with the Manichean character of the narrative.

In short, the Gulf War has strengthened the narrative's ideological power at a historical moment when many were beginning to wonder if the warfare state might perish with the cold war itself. And, in the coming months, the narrative will surely continue to gain strength as our leaders debate whether to proceed with more weapons procurements and whether to make the kind of ongoing military commitment to the Persian Gulf that they made to Europe during the cold war.

We will not see deep cuts in military spending and a fundamental restructuring of the American warfare state as long as this narrative and the institutions that sponsor it remain powerful. Displacing it will require more than simply fantasizing about what else could be bought with the Pentagon's money. We are only beginning to fully appreciate the sweep and historical scope of the narrative, its self-referential resilience, and its bureaucratic longevity. It would be naive to believe, however, that a narrative that has survived the end of the cold war will then crumble before the light artillery fire of hermeneutic analysis. Displacing the narrative will require political organizing against the military-industrial coalition, of course, but it will also require the construction of a new peace narrative that is as compelling and authentically American as the cold-war narrative.

The movement against the Gulf War sought, unlike the peace movement in the 1960s, to drape itself in the flag and to portray itself as an alternative expression of American patriotism. Similarly, an American peace narrative would tap into many of the same symbols and themes that animate the cold-war narrative, reworking them into a new plot. A diverse array of ideas might be drawn upon for this project.

Perhaps the strongest is a tradition stretching from Tom Paine to Martin Luther King, Jr., that argues America's exceptionalism lies in its destiny to bring an end to war. This might enable peace narrators to appropriate the word "stability," which has been so central to cold-war discourse, and to demilitarize it, reconstructing it around transnational institutions (such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) rather than around armed blocs of hostile nations.

We might also use the notion of American exceptionalism as George Washington did in his farewell speech to Congress, when he pleaded for a modified isolationist position that shunned the "entangling alliances" of fallen nations in a world of evil empires. While a rigidly isolationist position is neither desirable nor realistic, we do well to remember—especially when U.S. policymakers are already talking about a NATO-type regional commitment to buttress our interests in the Gulf—that Americans have historically doubted that their nation should play the role of global policeman.

Finally, we might look to some old American discourses about thrift and prosperity. According to Calvinist belief, Americans are called to abhor debt, while their piety is rewarded with material plenty. This vision jars against a world where the U.S. is sinking deeper into debt to buy weapons while the Japanese and Western Europeans are enjoying the supreme material abundance that is supposed to go with the American dream. Surely there is some leverage here to portray the warfare state as an un-American aberration that has prevented this generation from fulfilling America's destiny. Maybe it's time for a new jeremiad, a jeremiad for peace. □

Israel Conference

(Continued from p. 69)

Sa'adia Martziano (Translated from Hebrew)
Sa'adia Martziano was a founder of the Black Panthers in Israel in the 1970s. He served as Member of Knesset for the SHELI party (Israeli Zionist Left) from 1981–1983.

Yael Dayan said that we don't need to engage in soul-searching. She is wrong. We must stop, do some soul-searching, change the oil, and see if we are even on the right road. It is true that the people of the development towns and [poor] neighborhoods, and most of the Oriental Jewish population, are not in the active peace camp. But they are open to and ready for peace. But the socioeconomic situation that has taken root here for years through the mistakes of the Labor party (the historic Mapai) has caused this population to leave, and become alienated from, the peace camp and those who would like to lead the struggle for peace. It is not easy to bring them back.

But it is not yet too late, if the Left, the forces for peace, will get involved in the acute, daily problems of society. If the Left, and people who want peace, get involved in problems such as the drug problem—a problem that is spreading in extreme fashion throughout Israeli society, but is treated as if it were only the problem of a particular sector—if we get involved in problems of housing, of education, then I believe this population would come closer to us more quickly. As an Israeli, I would like to say to our American guests that I hope the U.S. administration will put pressure [on Israel] and withhold funds because, unfortunately, some of our leaders only understand the carrot-and-stick method. I think we have been dining at the American table for too long. It is time that they tell us "Stop" so that people here will understand that we can no longer run wild.

LEAH SHAKDIEL (Translated from Hebrew)

Leah Shakdiel is a member of the religious council in Yerucham, where she chairs the Committee on the Status of Women. She is a member of the board of Oz V'Shalom/Netivot Shalom.

As people who belong to the religious peace movement, we believe that "*Tzion B'Mishpat Tipadeh*" [Zion will be redeemed through Justice]. If we do not establish a just society here, including justice for Palestinians and other parts of society—women, Oriental Jews, etc.—this land will vomit us out of here. The Zionist revival we have had recently might be lost because of *sin'at hinam* [blind hatred], which we are taught was the cause of the destruction of the Temple. I am Orthodox, I am a feminist, I have chosen to live in a development town because I am concerned about the status of Oriental Jews in our society.

I think that we need an inclusive—not exclusive—peace program. So I suggest that we divide up the work. Just like we used to have a division of labor, in the previous generation. There were the pioneers that dried up the swamps and built kibbutzim and there were people who spent their time in congresses; others were involved in the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine during the British Mandate. I think we need a chart of all the different jobs of the peace movement. We need to learn how to respect the work of others.

So we need a foreign ministry of peace. This is where the political work is done. I think that most of the people here are engaged in this aspect of peace-work. We need a ministry of education and culture. What Michael Lerner has done by bringing us together is an example of the kind of work this ministry does. But there are a lot of other people here who are educators for peace, and who work in different communities. But education means something else as well. We also need to develop visions of peace. We must develop different types of symbols that speak to different communities (the secular Jewish community is one of these, and needs its own kind of symbols).

There is also the ministry of construction. I am expanding on Arthur Waskow's idea of "units of peace." For example, a Jewish–Palestinian discussion group ... someone who establishes a common economic project, or an antidrug project for both peoples ... this will be the ministry of construction.

There is another ministry that I wasn't quite sure how to name. At first I thought to call it the ministry of war, but that sounded really bad. So I suggest we call it the ministry of police, the ministry that fights crime. This ministry will engage in what is called a "nonviolent struggle." There is a very developed tradition for this in the peace movements. "Women in Black" is an example of this type of ministry. This ministry also includes fighting crime, the Occupation, and other horrors taking place among us, and any kind of struggle in which one puts himself in danger. This is not simple, it is very provocative, it invites violent reactions from the other side. Whoever goes into this ministry must know that this is dangerous, physically dangerous.... This ministry can include people who have proposed refusing to pay taxes, or part of their taxes ... even those who speak of refusing to serve [in the Territories]. Again, I want to be inclusive by saying that even if refusing to serve is not my thing, I have to be tolerant of other peoples' thing ... and acknowledge that they are working for peace in their ministry....

I have a final word for the guests among us here, our friends from overseas, and I prefer to say it in English [switches to English]. There are two more things that you, who came from overseas, should be considering seriously. One is aliya. If you want to make a difference here, come on aliya. Jews with right-wing views come on aliya in greater numbers than you do. But another thing that I think you should be committed to is to have a Jewish future. You should have children and you should raise them Jewish. And I'm not making jokes here. There are more Jews who worry about that in the other camp.

MENI BARZILAI

Meni Barzilai was advisor to Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres on development-town affairs and social welfare. He is a founder of Ohalim College and a former spokeperson for East for Peace.

I would like to tell a short story about what went on behind the scenes of this conference, which I think, at least in one respect, is a serious and significant symptom of one the problems of the Israeli Left. This conference is the fruit of an idea that has been going around for two years. It first came up in contacts that Michael Lerner had with part of what is called the Oriental-Jewish Left in Israel. Michael felt that there are problems that need to be examined, that there is a certain audience that the Israeli Left might not be reaching. It sounded very legitimate and logical, but not to part of the Left in Israel. Part of the Israeli Left did everything possible to prevent this conference from taking place, so that this conference will not hold up the mirror that it intended to hold in front of the Left to see if we are not making mistakes.

From an organizational point of view, I am accusing Peace Now—publicly from this podium. Part of the Peace Now movement did everything it could to prevent this conference because it wasn't willing to stand in front of the mirror and see where it might be making mistakes. But believe me, this conference is the most important thing that is going on now in Israeli society, because the Israeli Left has no partners other than the already-existing Oriental-Jewish Left. If we can't agree among us, if we can't reach common ground, we won't be able to accomplish anything, even in our dreams. You have to know that you too can make a difference. You can influence not only the Israeli government, as some people have tonight (that the United States needs to put pressure on Israel, which is true under some circumstances and not true under other circumstances), there is also room for influencing the Israeli Left. Tell it that you want it to change its colors, its direction. We cannot dream about peace for this country when 60 percent of its residents of this country are being ignored.

I have had the honor and the pleasure of working with Shimon Peres for several years. But unfortunately, all of the things I am saying are also true of the Labor party. There are people in the Labor party who claim openly or secretly—that after the last several election campaigns, maybe it is time to get a divorce from the Oriental Jews. Why should we have to constantly be justifying ourselves to them? Let's be a party of the upper-middle class. This reflects an attitude that is pervasive in the peace camp. I thank *Tikkun* for helping us in the Oriental peace camp publicly raise these issues.

MK SHULAMITH ALONI (Trans. from Hebrew)
Shulamith Aloni is the chair of RATZ.

We must stand together. Before we talk about tactics, we have to start speaking truth. We must liberate ourselves from a large part of our doubletalk. An entire people who sings the song "*Al Na Ta'akor Natua*" [Don't Uproot What Has Been Planted] cannot forever be uprooting olive trees and orchards and crops of another people. A people that teaches its children that a man is responsible for his own sins, cannot tolerate having children, and brothers, and mothers, and the elderly being held responsible for the sins of one member of their family.

In May, a special unit of the IDF stormed a house in a village near Ramallah, with faces covered by kafiyehs, and kidnapped a 17-year-old boy. The family was sure that he was suspected of being a collaborator and that he was being abducted. They took the car of a neighbor (a doctor) and ten people chased the abductors in two cars. They reached the gates of a jail for detainees. At the jail, the Palestinians began to think that the abductors were settlers. When they reached the jail, other soldiers began to beat them. One of the soldiers—his account has been written up and verified, with names—bragged about how he beat the doctor and broke his bones. We are the government there. We are responsible for law and justice. Law and order. We teach our children that "*Tzion Be'Mishpat Tipadeh*" [Zion will be redeemed through Justice]. And here we are completely demoralizing a population of 1,700,000. Where is the law? The people who were beaten, how will they continue to live? How long shall we look for symmetry between the victim and those who enslave him?

The Palestinians today don't have human rights, civil rights, or political rights. How is it possible, at the end of the twentieth century, to decide that a nation has no right of opinion in the determination of its destiny? In 1905, when Norway received its independence from Sweden, and colonialism was still in full bloom then, where was the plebescite conducted, among the Swedes or the Norwegians? Don't [Palestinians] they have a right to participate in making this decision? This is the land in which they live.

We are the only democratic country in the world that has remained colonialist—and with brutal laws, if they can still be called laws. Because in addition to the mandatory laws and edicts, the ruler-judge-executive—the military government—makes new laws every other day, at its convenience. We have undermined the democratic foundations of our society. We have a wonderful excuse. Golda Meir once said, "After what the world has done to us, no one has the right to tell us what to do, no matter what we do." This motto still exists. We are working on the world's feelings of guilt, and with crude demagoguery, we compare ourselves and the Palestinians as equals.

I am not going to tell the United States not to give us money. But it is our right to tell them—the Jews there and the Americans—that if they live under laws and under a Constitution that guarantee human rights, if they can dictate to the Soviet Union what laws to pass in order to qualify for U.S. aid, why does the United States continue to glorify Israeli democracy, which is the only colonialist democracy at the end of the twentieth century? Why doesn't it raise the same norms? Every Jew who lives there [in the U.S.] knows the value of human freedoms, the value of ending discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion or sex. We demand of the United States, and of the American Jews, that the same values that they struggle for there, they should acknowledge and fight for here. □

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Ambiguity of God

(Continued from p. 70)

yielded all the fruits of civilization, but the same power has also brought forth our civilization's horrors.

The ambiguity of life is a truth we all know on the small scale as well as the large. The experience of empowerment so central to feminism may allow women to make considered and important choices, but it does not guarantee that we will always choose rightly. Many movements for liberation generate new forms of tyranny or infighting; many women have been hurt in the name of feminism. In the same way, the Egyptians lost their lives when the Israelites walked safely through the Red Sea; the Palestinians lost their homeland when the Jews found one. On the other hand, it is not just projects begun with good intentions that often go awry. Choices made from selfish motives or dictated by circumstance sometimes lead to unanticipated good or open up new possibilities we could never have imagined. "Were it not for the evil impulse," said Rabbi Nahman B. Samuel, "man would not take a wife, or beget a child, or engage in business."

These truths do not absolve us from responsibility for the consequences of our choices, but they do point to ambiguity, contradiction, and paradox as fundamental aspects of our experience. One of the things I have always most valued about the Jewish tradition is its refusal to disconnect God from the contradictory whole of reality. "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe—I, the Lord do all these things," Isaiah announces (1 Isa. 45:7). This has always seemed to me a far more religiously satisfying perspective than a theology that would close off huge areas of our experience and declare them devoid of sacred power. I do not know how a monotheist can choose to find God in the dry land and *not* in the tidal wave that destroys it—or only in our power to choose life and not also in our power to *choose* (see Deut. 30:15 and 19).

Yet I certainly understand why I and other feminists have not raced to deal with this aspect of God. It is not unique or central to feminist experience; and in addition, it is difficult and painful. More than this, however, the ambiguous God threatens to bring us back to the images of domination we see as so problematic in the tradition. I and many other feminists have pointed to the destructiveness of hierarchical images of God such as Lord and King, images that draw upon and in turn justify oppression in society. But what if God as Lord points not simply to the manipulative ruler of history, the cosmic patriarch who authorizes numerous forms of oppression, but also the nonrational and unpredictable dimension of experience, the forces we cannot control or contain? How do we name the power in the world that makes us know our vulnerability, that terrifies and overwhelms us? Can we name this power without invoking images of Otherness? Can we jettison the Lord of history without also losing the Lord of contradictory life? Can we name the ambiguous God without resorting to the traditional metaphors that have rationalized oppression and denied the humanity of women?

I do not know the answers to these questions, but they bring me to a new place of wrestling my tradition. If I read the traditional liturgy from the perspective of God's ambiguity, then I suddenly see it in a new and ambiguous light. Kaddish, for example, is not simply a hymn to God's sovereignty; it is a hymn to God's sovereignty said precisely at the moment when I most deeply know my lack of power to preserve those I love. It is an acknowledgement of my own impotence exactly when I know myself as impotent. But should I pray to this contradictory God? Or should I pray *against* him or her? If I acknowledged God's ambiguity directly rather than burying it in images of praise would that make the ambiguity any easier to worship? Do I have to change "who creates weal and woe" to "who creates all things" in order to be able to say the words? And how do I continue to pray to the God who empowers me when I have confronted the equivocal nature of all power? □

Erratum: Due to a typesetting error, one word was omitted from Patricia Traxler's poem in the July/August issue, "Ringstrasse Elegy, 1913." The full stanza should have read: "Any man might find his own fingers closing round the stalk / And squeezing then pulling quickly to have it off." *Tikkun* regrets the error.

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