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

Fifth Anniversary Issue

TIKKUN

Reflections on Five Years of Tikkun: *Michael Lerner*
Reviews: *Theda Skocpol and Steve Seligman*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1991

LINKAGE?
LOANS, AID, & LAND FOR PEACE

Congressman Stephen Solarz, MK Shulamith Aloni, MK Yair Tzaban, Michael Walzer, David Saperstein, Naomi Chazan, and Jerome Segal



After Communism Collapsed
Reginald Zelnik • Todd Gitlin

Women and Procreation
Judith Hauptman

Israeli Torture
Stanley Cohen

Pornographic Rights?
Rochelle Gurstein • Camille Paglia

Crown Heights
Jim Sleeper

Alma Di
Ari Elon

IDENTITY POLITICS

Ilene Philipson, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Ellen Willis, Arthur Waskow, and David Biale

64858 11
0 306775 8

That's How It Is

Queens, 1963

Richard Chess

Your mother over the house
like a Chagall bride.
A few rungs below the moon.
Married to nothing human, she sings
a kind of anti-lullaby.
Angels also traffic that ladder, some
like lightbulbs excited with messages
they descend to deliver,
others, their filaments spent, return
with dim expressions.
And though the night's amply disturbed
with the chattering of wings, her voice
alone keeps you up.
As far as you know, that's how it is
between mothers and daughters,
with a story she tucks you in,
with a kiss closes your eyes,
then before you can sink
into the warm sand of sleep,
she has turned into a winged nightmare
with the voice of a crow
come for the gifts she has given you.
What is it tonight?
The necklace with the black stone,
the jewelry box into which it is folded,
the drawer in which the box sleeps like a tourist,
the bureau itself, that outbound ocean liner?
Perhaps tonight she'll seize the whole room
which she now understands is the space
that tricks you into believing the world
a navigable, generous place.
It's late, very late
when you cry *father,* who is not
a happy groom. In fact, he is
hardly a man at all anymore,
fifteen years with your mother,
carrying the stringless violin
she gave him, stuttering like
a goat when she permits him
to speak.

Richard Chess teaches at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. His poems have recently appeared in Tampa Review *and the* American Poetry Review.

TIKKUN

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

2 **Letters:** *Cosmokun;* PC; Is Rosen Fair to FAIR?
7 **Editorials:** U.S. Loan Guarantees to Israel; Middle East Peace Conference; Black Anti-Semitism; Reflections as *Tikkun* Turns Five
15 **Free Associations**

Articles

17 Todd Gitlin **Sisyphus After the Putsch** A wild rhetoric of utopian capitalism following the Soviet coup is as fantastical as the political delusions of the Soviet bloc under Communism.

20 Reginald E. Zelnik **Two Cheers for Gorbachev** Right-wing Sovietologists have underestimated the importance of Gorbachev's maneuvering in clearing the path to a peaceful revolution.

23 Stanley Cohen **Talking About Torture in Israel** Breaking through the discursive evasions that conceal the unspeakable truths of the Occupation's cruelties.

31 **Linkage: Loans, Aid, and Land for Peace** A roundtable in which **MK Shulamith Aloni, Naomi Chazan, David Saperstein, Jerome Segal, Representative Stephen Solarz, MK Yair Tzaban,** and **Michael Walzer** debate U.S. economic pressure on Israel to halt settlement in the Occupied Territories and negotiate peace with the Arab World.

43 Jim Sleeper **Demagoguery in America: Wrong Turns in the Politics of Race** Protest leaders take to the streets in Brooklyn, turning pain into political psychodrama. Until New York's citizens can own up to some transracial truths, everybody loses.

51 **Special Focus** In the past two decades, many women, African-Americans, Jews, gays, lesbians, and others have made their identities the center of their political activity. **Ilene Philipson** suggests that the politics of identity may replace one straitjacket with another. **Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Ellen Willis, David Biale,** and **Arthur Waskow** respond.

65 Ari Elon **Alma Di** An Israeli writer splices fiction, memoir, and religious commentary to redefine contemporary Jewish experience.

70 **Current Debate: High Art or Hard-Core?** **Rochelle Gurstein** argues that liberal debate on pornography has buried the question of how sexual objectification and anonymity ever became acceptable representations of our common world. **Camille Paglia** responds.

81 Judith Hauptman **Maternal Dissent: Women and Procreation in the Mishna** Mishnaic tradition lends an unexpected voice to female agency in its interpretation of the biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply.

83 **Reviews:** Stephen Seligman on Robert Coles; Theda Skocpol on the travails of the modern welfare state.

Fiction 36 *Schoom* Jonathan Wilson

Poetry 42 *For My Son's Bris* Kathryn Hellerstein

Inside Front Cover: *That's How It Is* by Richard Chess.
Cover art: *Twenty Dollar Bill* by Robert Birmelin. Acrylic. 72 x 108 inches. Courtesy of Claude Bernard Gallery, New York.
Photography: The photograph on page 8 is by Les Stone/Impact Visuals; on page 15, by Lydia Gans; on page 18, by David Blumenfeld/Impact Visuals; on page 21, by Lydia Gans; on page 75, by AP/Wide World Photos; on page 45, by Clark Jones/Impact Visuals; on page 79, by Robert Mapplethorpe © The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe; on page 84, by Charles Klein.

TIKKUN

Editor and Publisher:
Michael Lerner

Associate Editor:
Peter Gabel

Assistant Editor:
Chris Lehmann

Book Editor:
Michael Kazin

Fiction Editor:
Anne Roiphe

Poetry Editor:
Marge Piercy

Literary Editors:
Phillip Lopate, Leonard Michaels, Francine Prose, Linda Zisquit

Contributing Editors:
Paul Berman, David Biale, Daniel Boyarin, E. M. Broner, Arnold Eisen, Todd Gitlin, Mikhail Iossel, Christopher Lasch, Ruth Messinger, Gina Morantz-Sanchez, Gary Peller, Ilene Philipson, Ruth Rosen, Lisa Rubens, Milton Viorst, Steve Wasserman, Eli Zaretsky

Production Manager:
Anne Flatté

Editorial Assistant:
Andrea Craig

Assistant to the Editor:
Marina Rustow

Assistant Publisher:
Erika Henik

Controller:
Valerie Bach Vaz

Israel Office:
Aaron Back, Andrea London, Danny London, Beth Sandweiss

Editorial Consultants:
Rebecca Adams, Margo Peller Feeley, Shifra Raffel, Josh Weiner

Interns:
Heather Ashley, Alissa Blackman, David Fisher, Tony Frank, David Green, Joanne Nerenberg, Molly Phinney, David Stein, Jacqueline Weiss

Proofreader:
Nancy Schweiger, Tracy Walsh

Advertising Coordinator:
Mark Rosen

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

Letters

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

"PC" AND COSMOKUN

To the Editor:

Puh-leez! "Some" found that satirical *Cosmokun* (July/August, 1991) "offensively sexist?"

Lighten up! As a NOW card-carrying feminist and an *intensely* PC Jew, I laughed out loud.

Didn't Emma Goldman say something about dancing at her revolution? I want to laugh at mine.

Susan Berg
Port Jefferson, New York

To the Editor:

Try to imagine a parody of moral leftist Jewish politics inscribed on the bodies of men in a magazine directed toward men. Are you laughing in the *Tikkun* office yet? Probably not. Ironically, feminists (including Jewish feminists) have no sense of humor, and yet there is something so funny about women. What better way to trivialize politics then to feminize them? What more appropriate way to put moral issues to rest than to compare them to anxiety about thighs, pantyhose, and clothing? What's not witty, satiric, or even sophomoric about this "humor" is its kinship with generations of Jewish "humor" enacted on and at the expense of Jewish women. If Jews are anxious about their place in the consumer society, they invent Jewish princesses on which to project their fear of themselves as controlled entirely by production and consumption. If Jewish men worry that they are unattractive or weak in the eyes of the larger culture, they construct Jewish women as aggressively unattractive and nonerotic. If Jews fear that they are unable to resist the overwhelming pulls of Americanization, whether in 1910 or 1970, they editorialize about the failures of Jewish women to maintain Jewish homes. And, of course, if they worry they cannot Americanize or acculturate fast enough, they portray Jewish women as backward, not hip, housebound and a drag on them. And if a serious Jewish leftist political magazine deals with significant issues, the mainstream Jewish press finds its most thoughtful critique in comparing *Tikkun* to *Cosmopolitan*.

Tikkun (ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit corporation.
Editorial offices: 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619; (510) 482-0805. Book reviews: Michael Kazin, Dept. of History, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016; (202) 885-2415.

Copyright ©1991 by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. All rights reserved. Opinions expressed in *Tikkun* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board or of the people listed on the masthead. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a SASE, or they will not be returned.

Israel office: P.O. Box 10528, Jerusalem 91103; (02) 717887.
Subscriptions can be placed by calling (800) 877-5231. $30 for 6 issues, $60 for 12 issues, $90 for 18 issues. Add $12 per year for all foreign subscriptions (including Canada and Latin America). Please pay for all orders in U.S. funds (including postal money orders) and with checks drawn from a U.S. bank only. Institutional subscriptions: $40 for 6 issues. Limited availability of back issues—call the toll-free number above.
All subscription problems can be dealt with by our subscription service: *Tikkun,* P.O. Box 332, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0332. Please allow 6-8 weeks for any subscription transaction, including receiving your first issue, solving subscription problems, or changing your address. (You may get a bill or a renewal notice after you've already paid or renewed. Please disregard. Bills and payments cross in the mail.)
Articles appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Political Science Abstract,* the *Alternative Press Index, Book Review Index, Index to Jewish Periodicals,* and *Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO);* in *Magazine Index, Magazine Index Plus,* and *Academic Index,* all available from Information Access Co., (800) 227-8431; and in the *Left Index*. Book reviews appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBRR).* 16 mm and 35 mm microfilm, 105 microfiche, and article copies are available from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Selected articles are also available via *Tikkun Online* in the Jewish conference on the WELL. Audiotaped back issues of *Tikkun* are available free of charge for blind or visually impaired people. Contact the library at the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc., (212) 889-2525. **U.S. newsstand and bookstore distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870; (800) 221-3148.**

As long as Jewish men and women use each other as the terrain for rage, pain, or embarrassment, we will continue to inflict harm not only on one another, but on an American Jewish culture that desperately needs tending. *Cosmokun* raises no interesting questions about political correctness. It only asks us to understand why gender is the medium through which Jews comment on their Jewishness.

Riv-Ellen Prell
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the Editor:

I didn't laugh when I saw Gary Rosenblatt's satire of *Tikkun* titled *Cosmokun*. As a woman *Tikkun* reader I felt laughed at: marginalized, trivialized, mocked.

Women are slaves to the standards of beauty dictated by our culture, blasted at us constantly through the media. Believe it or not, many enlightened and socially responsible women wake up in the morning, step on the scale, stare in the mirror, and agonize over wardrobe. I'm painfully conscious of every minute I waste worrying about my appearance, of every hard-earned dollar misspent on clothes, beauty aids, new diet programs, and finally, therapy. But I'm addicted to the image our culture—still male-dominated I might add—has chosen for me. The multi-billion-dollar beauty industry, determined to keep women enslaved,

STUDENTS FOR JUDAISM & SOCIAL JUSTICE (SJSJ)

a nationwide organization of
Progressive Jewish Students
affiliated with TIKKUN Magazine

invites you to attend a

WEST COAST CONFERENCE

OF PROGRESSIVE JEWISH STUDENTS

at U.C. Santa Cruz, Sunday, January 19th. Featuring Michael Lerner and other TIKKUN speakers on Israel (the peace process, loan guarantees, etc.), Black/Jewish relations, anti-Semitism in the Left, and other controversial issues. For information, write to SJSJ, 114 Calvin Place, Santa Cruz, Ca. 95060.

Hesitant Fire

Selected Prose of Max Jacob

Translated and edited by Moishe Black and Maria Green

A serious artist and a literary clown nonpareil, Max Jacob was born in Brittany in 1876 and died in a Nazi Prison camp in 1944. His influence on modern French poetry was profound. The translators have succeeded in catching his gift for linguistic innovation, for mimicry and buffoonery often a millimeter away from melancholy. A volume in our French Modernist Library series. Available December. $25.00

Inscribing the Other

Sander L. Gilman

In thirteen probing, provocative essays Gilman focuses on the writing of great authors who by birth or choice found themselves outside the mainstream of their culture: Goethe, Freud, Wilde, Heine, Nietzsche, Levi, among others. Gilman reinterprets their writing as it reveals their efforts to come to terms with their real or imagined sense of difference. A volume in our Texts & Contexts series. $30.00

Heinrich Heine and the Occident

Multiple Identities, Multiple Receptions

Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Sander L. Gilman

Heinrich Heine's (1797-1856) impact on various cultures has been deep and disparate including his legacy to Jews. *Heinrich Heine and the Occident* draws together scholars from France, Germany, Italy, and the United States to assess the history, importance, and influence of Heine's work throughout the West. $35.00

Available at bookstores or from
The University of Nebraska Press
901 N 17 · Lincoln 68588-0520
(800) 755-1105
publishers since 1941

"Nebraska

A major landmark on the road to peace

No Trumpets, No Drums

A Two-State Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

MARK A. HELLER & SARI NUSSEIBEH

"This book, written jointly by a brave and embattled Palestinian philosopher and a tough-minded Israeli political scientist, is doubly important: because it shows that antagonists of equally strong patriotic feelings and equal goodwill can cooperate, and because they examine a two-state settlement in all its dimensions and find sensible solutions for all the issues. This work is thus altogether a model, a challenge, and a reproach, for the statesmen on both sides."

— *Stanley Hoffmann, Harvard University*

Hill and Wang

A division of Farrar Straus Giroux

Available at bookstores everywhere, or call 1-800-631-8571.

distracted from more serious tasks, is a formidable enemy.

I frequently remind myself that my preoccupation with beauty is not entirely my fault. By reminding myself that my personal struggle actually fits into a larger social picture, I ease my private shame a bit. It is some comfort to know that my concerns constitute a cultural phenomenon.

Rosenblatt mocks what is for many women a painful double-bind: our culture values and promotes feminine beauty yet simultaneously trivializes it. The model in this photo gets ogled, to be sure, but is then summarily dismissed as her concerns about breasts and thighs are juxtaposed with serious issues like neo-conservatism or the fate of the Palestinians. He may have set out to mock *Tikkun,* but Rosenblatt has succeeded in mocking women by implying that anyone concerned about a hemline can't possibly be concerned about the Green Line.

Susan Dworsky
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the Editor:

As someone who's been reading *Tikkun* since it began, and as a feminist, I really enjoyed the satirical item by Gary Rosenblatt.

It's nice in these tense times to see something that silently screams "lighten up." I'm for more humor! By the way, I'm sure fifteen years ago I would have been outraged by *Cosmokun.* How we change.

Janis Berman
Bethesda, Maryland

To the Editor:

The best page of the July/August *Tikkun* was the *Cosmokun* cover. It was funny, unlike the rest of the magazine; it was provocative, in that it stimulated rather than deadened discussion, and it made an important point through parody. It mocked *Tikkun's* heavy self-righteousness, while pointing to a real source of sexism in America today—women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan,* which focus almost exclusively on a woman's appearance and her ability to "get" a man. I'd like to see more of such humor and parody in *Tikkun.*

Wendy Leibowitz
New York, New York

On Tikkun

To the Editor:

After having had little contact with my Jewish world for many years, I received a *Tikkun* subscription as a gift and fell headfirst into a dozen controversies. It took a few issues to realize what enormous diversities of thought are out there now. Don't lighten up too much on the "heaviness" of your articles. There are already enough magazines crammed with pap and drivel for those who claim "not to have time." Thinking doesn't always process like a video game—quick reaction to a minimum amount of input. Your articles can and should be read, chewed upon, shouted at, shared.

In March I spent three weeks in Israel as part of the Volunteers for Israel program. My group of fifteen was predominantly "traditional New York Jewish liberal." Each one said just the "right" things about civil rights, the economy, and politics when we were discussing American issues. But these folk turned into rabid Kahane supporters when it came to the Palestinians in Israel. It was both a frightening and sobering experience.

The Israelis, especially the upper-level military historians who were our guest speakers, were very good at touching all the right notes that Americans love—the tank battles, sacrifices in 1948 and since, the killing of children, the historical "right" of Jews to claim all of the old Palestine, the burning of forests (planted by all of us) by terrorists, etc. Problems such as Israel's training and supplying of military goods to both sides in Third-World struggles, an out-of-control Mossad that uses torture freely, a political party that wants to deport thousands of people "just because they're not like us"—all of this we steered away from in group discussion.

When I brought up your magazine, the sum of comment was "It's *too* liberal." I said they'd all given up too much of their youthful idealism and needed a swift intellectual and emotional kick in the butt.

Hang in there, Michael Lerner. There are a lot of us out here who care about Israel's survival but also care about Palestinian rights. Keep the fight going in print—may it lead to peace in the Land.

Carol Ragan
Detroit, Michigan

To the Editor:

After reading your last, and as usual, excellent issue (September/October 1991), I know now why we need *Tikkun* more than ever both here and especially in Israel. *Tikkun* has emerged as the leading forum for progressive positions on the Middle East, anti-Semitism, racism, Black-Jewish tensions, women's and gay rights, religious life, and virtually every other issue. The attacks upon Michael Lerner only point out how *powerful,* how *threatening,* not how weak, we have become, but we must be vigilant. Just remember how right-wingers almost single-handedly destroyed Breyra (a group that raised questions about Israeli policy) and people's careers just a decade or so ago!

All I can say is the old Jewish expression—*"ad meah v'esrim"*—may you live to be 120 years old!

Jack Nusan Porter
Newton Highlands, Massachusetts

Is Rosen Fair to FAIR?

To the Editor:

Jay Rosen's article on media coverage of the Gulf War ("From Slogan to Spectacle," May/June 1991) made repeated references to Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), but seemed bent on caricaturing our views. FAIR is the media watch group concerned about the narrow corporate ownership of the press and the media's allegiances to official agendas. We are an anti-censorship group seeking greater media pluralism and the inclusion of minority and public interest voices in national discourse.

Among Rosen's misconceptions is that FAIR sees itself fighting the "right-wing bias" of the national media—one of several misconceptions about FAIR that enables him to equate us with right-wing groups that charge "left-wing bias." Rosen was completely unaware of our widely discussed thesis that the primary bias of the national media is centrist. FAIR's thesis is that many media professionals—on guard against left-wing and (to a lesser degree) right-wing bias—fall into the trap of believing that middle-of-the-road viewpoints or sources are somehow unbiased. They believe the Left and Right are engaging in propaganda, while they in the center offer just the straight news. FAIR challenges mainstream journalists to be aware of their centrist bias: Some admit that they hadn't previously considered the notion that being in the center, being generally supportive of the status quo, is a bias they need to be conscious of.

FAIR has found certain characteristics in news coverage shaped by centrist bias: an over-reliance on experts from the political elite or academics close to that elite; bland, euphemistic language putting the best face on the U.S. political system, compared to often blunt talk about other countries (the *New York Times* refers to Japan's "ruling elite" and Vietnam's "empire" but never a U.S. ruling elite or U.S. empire); when national scandals come to light, a focus less on the scandal than on how well "the system works" in fixing it; portrayal of U.S. foreign policy as consistently being on the side of human rights, democracy, and negotiation toward peace.

When presenting viewpoints at odds with the centrist worldview, national media turn continually to rightists and almost never to leftists. That's why foreign policy debates hinge on whether the U.S. should continue to insist on human rights and democracy (the centrist view) or whether such insistence helps our enemies (the



Freud's Moses

Judaism Terminable and Interminable

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi

In this "**dazzlingly brilliant**" book (Irving Howe), the distinguished historian Yosef Yerushalmi argues that Freud's last work, *Moses and Monotheism*, provides startling new insights into Freud's feelings toward anti-Semitism and the gentile world, his ambivalence about psychoanalysis as a Jewish science, and his identity as a "godless Jew." Illus. $25.00

Yale University Press
Dept. 724, 92A Yale Sta.
New Haven, CT 06520

Children with a Star

Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe

Debórah Dwork

"To view the Holocaust through the eyes of children is to see it for all its madness and injustice. **It is impossible to read this book without raging.**"—Anne Roiphe, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review* 38 illus. $25.00



Holocaust Testimonies

The Ruins of Memory

Lawrence L. Langer

"An **altogether brilliant** mapping of the tortuous terrain of memory presented by the accumulation of oral testimonies on the Holocaust....**Extraordinary.**"
—Chaim Potok $25.00

Economic Origins of Antisemitism

Poland and Its Jews in the Early Modern Period

Hillel Levine

Exploring the economic roots of antisemitism, Hillel Levine traces the position of Jews in Poland from the end of the sixteenth century to the demise of the Polish state in 1795.

"**A novum in Jewish historiography.**"
—Marek Web, YIVO Institute $30.00

Jews in the American Academy, 1900-1940

The Dynamics of Intellectual Assimilation

Susanne Klingenstein

An engaging look at the careers of the first Jewish professors of humanities in American universities.

"**[Klingenstein's] study of heroic intellect stands out.**"—Cynthia Ozick
12 illus. $35.00

Do you want to be part of a *Tikkun* salon?

All over the country, *Tikkun* readers come together at salons or study groups—two of the ways the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ), *Tikkun*'s education arm, gets our ideas more widely discussed. At salons, which generally meet once a month, someone in the group makes a brief presentation on a topic addressed in the magazine, and then there is a general discussion for about an hour, followed by refreshments (often a potluck with yummy, homemade food), hanging out, socializing, and meeting new people. Study groups give more focused attention to articles in the magazine; group members read the articles in advance of the monthly meeting. Some have decided to use the *Tikkun Anthology* as the basis of their study. If you write to us, we can tell you if there's already a salon or study group in your area. If not, you can help organize one, and we will help get you in contact with *Tikkun* readers in your area. Write to: Erika Henik c/o CJSJ, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619-3002.

What are *your* plans to respond to Shamir when he comes to the U.S. in late November?

Most American Jews will once again feel disempowered and misrepresented when thousands of people attending the General Assembly of Jewish Federations give Shamir a standing ovation. But how are *you* going to make your displeasure known? We established the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ) as a way to present an alternative perspective—but we need people in every city to help us strategize about what can be done around the country to amplify our alternative voice. Are you willing to be such a CJSJ person in your locale—not just for this moment, but for the period ahead? If so, send us your home and work phone numbers and any ideas you have, and we'll be in touch. Write to: Erika Henik c/o CJSJ/*Tikkun*, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619-3002.

rightist view). Not included in the debate is the leftist view that U.S. policy often stands against human rights and democracy.

It's ironic that Rosen, unaware of our theory of news bias, traffics in various centrist clichés himself. For example, he trivializes our well-documented studies of media performance by equating our work with that of right-wing groups that, in Rosen's words, "employ the same means to confirm an opposite thesis: the liberal bias among journalists." Instead of facile, centrist equations, a conscientious academic would try to determine if the two groups really do "employ the same means," or if, instead, one group engages in solid research and the other in quackery.

Mainstream journalists (including dozens of TV critics) regularly give major, serious attention to FAIR's studies of TV news bias. Unlike Rosen, these mainstream journalists distinguish between FAIR's well-thought-out, well-documented media criticism and that of right-wing groups that can't distinguish negative coverage ("Reagan sleeps at meetings"; "Bush reneged on taxes") from biased coverage.

Rosen criticizes FAIR's demands for media "fairness" and "balance" on the grounds that 1) such demands make it difficult for many journalists to distinguish our criticism from that of the Right; 2) journalists already employ notions of "fairness" and "balance" to dismiss all media criticism; and 3) the way to get noticed and to produce criticism that really matters is to demand that journalists be "more enterprising in creating the conditions in politics that favor public debate and rational discussion, more willing to join in the fight for a vital public sphere." In fact, FAIR's media critique has been taken seriously and is seen as different from right-wing complaints because of the overwhelming nature of our documentation. After our study on the selection of guests on "Nightline," the show's next staff meeting produced comments like: "Tonight's panel is three white, male lawyers again. What'll FAIR say?"

Like many liberals who apologize for the elite media, Rosen can't bring himself to admit that the dominant factor in biased news coverage is political bias. He must therefore cast about for a substitute explanation. When it comes to the Gulf War, Rosen focuses on TV's bent for reducing news to drama, and complains about "the gratuitous use of music to set a dramatic mood" and "the montage techniques of MTV." It is telling that Rosen, a Gannett Media Center researcher, considers this serious media criticism, but dismisses as "victimology" empirical studies of who gets to speak on the news and who doesn't. It is also telling that Rosen skirts over FAIR's concerns that structural and ownership pressures impinge on independent journalism—such as the fact that NBC is owned by GE, which made millions of dollars in profits from weaponry used in the Gulf and may earn more from rebuilding Kuwait.

Tikkun readers who are unfamiliar with FAIR's brand of media analyisis can obtain a free copy of our magazine, *EXTRA!*, by writing 130 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001, or calling (212) 630-6700.

Jeff Cohen
Executive Director

Jay Rosen Replies:

I agree with Jeff Cohen that the prevailing ideology in American journalism involves a mystique of the center, in which the existence of views on either side is supposed to demonstrate the journalist's even-handed pursuit of truth. We agree, as well, that the arrogance of the press is its blithe assumption that everyone else is "political" (which means biased), while the journalist is somehow above or outside politics. At issue in my essay was the following question: What sort of criticism should we, as citizens of the Left, offer the people who, in the grip of this ideology, produce news coverage of major events like the Gulf War? FAIR's answer is that we should prove to journalists that, while they often don't realize it, they, too, are biased—against the Left, against "dissent," against those they unfairly marginalize. I have argued that this sort of criticism is ultimately shallow and ineffective, because it must proceed in the name of the very values—fairness, balance, independence—that allow journalists to deny what we might call their politicalness. The challenge, then, for us as well as the press, is to learn to think about journalism as a *legitimately political* activity, which raises the question: What sort of "commitment" is it

(Continued on p. 96)

Editorials and Reflections on the First Five Years of Tikkun

Michael Lerner

Linkage

I wish that President Bush had chosen another issue besides Soviet Jewish resettlement as a vehicle to launch his first important attempt to pressure Israel to change its West Bank policies. Israel retains the support and loyalty of American Jews at least partly because it remains the one safe haven for Jews facing persecution. The resurgence of overt anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is one good reason to want Israel to remain strong and secure. So for Bush to frame his assault on Israeli settlement policies by urging postponement of loan guarantees for Soviet Jews was bound to provoke a large show of Jewish support for the loan guarantees. I too want the world to provide adequate funding for the resettlement of Soviet Jews—and loan guarantees may certainly help secure that funding.

Yet in many ways Shamir gave Bush no choice but to challenge the loan guarantees. It was Shamir, *not* Bush, who politicized the issue of Soviet Jewish immigration. Starting in early 1990, Shamir clearly announced his intention to use Soviet Jewish immigration to counter any potential threat of a "demographic problem" (that is to say, the threat of higher Palestinian birth rates eventually producing an Arab majority in Israel). Shamir understood that he could not officially require Soviet Jews to settle on the West Bank, but he was able to ensure his program for building a Jewish majority in the Occupied Territories with two other programs: 1) constructing cheap housing, a package of low-interest mortgage loans, and a network of newly built highways to ensure that lower-income Jews would find "market conditions" irresistibly attractive and hence "freely" decide to settle in the new suburban West Bank housing; and 2) building housing in the territory close to Jerusalem, incorporating this land into the city of Jerusalem, and then claiming that since such settlements were *really* in Jerusalem and since Jerusalem couldn't really be called the West Bank, no one should object.

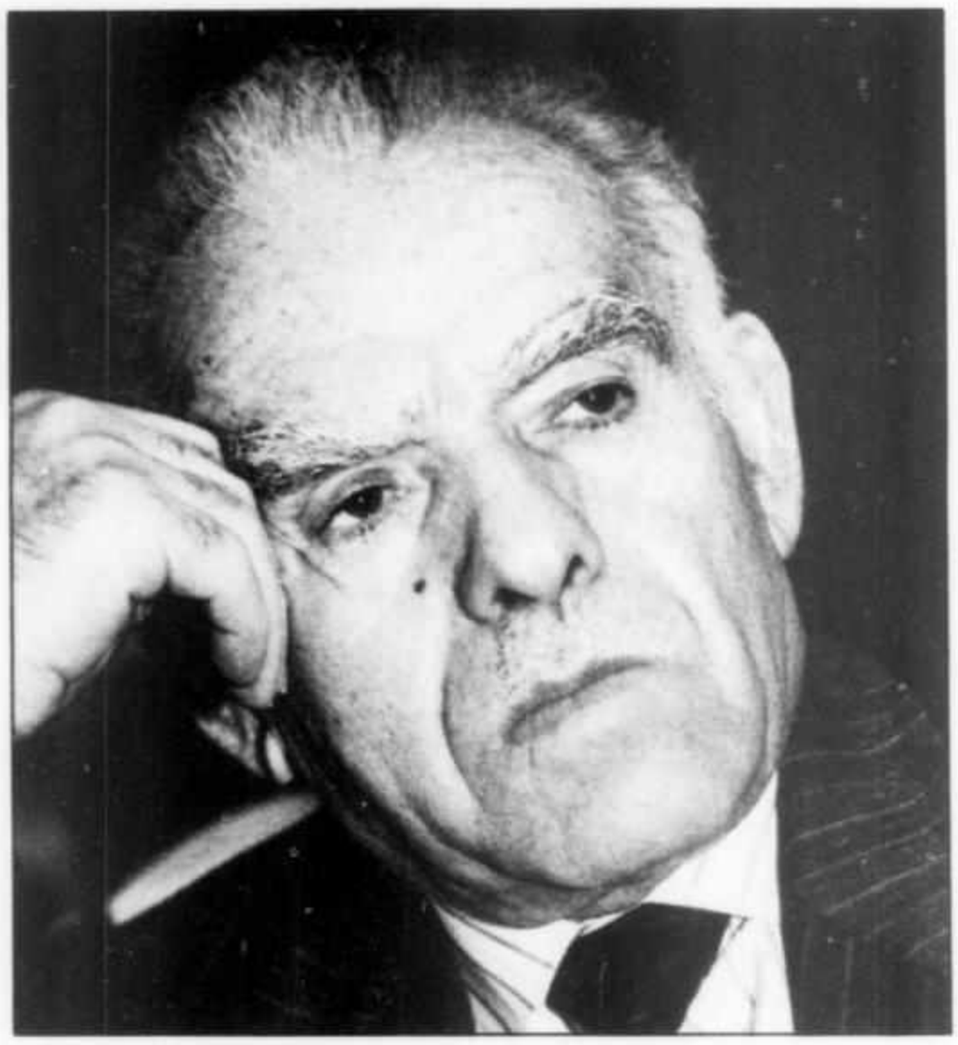
To add insult to injury, whenever U.S. Secretary of State Baker arrived in Israel, Israeli rightists announced the opening of a new West Bank settlement. And in speech after speech, Shamir insisted that although he was willing to participate in negotiations and an international conference, he had no intention of ever agreeing to trade land for peace in the West Bank, which both he and the Likud party view as the historic land of Judea and Samaria, and hence simply nonnegotiable.

But to carry out Shamir's strategy, Israel needs loan monies to be used inside Israel; this would then free up the billions of dollars for settlements on the West Bank. If U.S.-sponsored Middle East negotiations could be dragged out for the next several years while Israel pursued a crash-program of housing construction, Shamir will have created a new set of "facts" to make U.S. demands for an exchange of land for peace appear to be nothing but wishful thinking. Shamir's interim autonomy plan for the Occupied Territories would postpone all discussion of settlements for the next several years, during which time tens of thousands of Israelis would take up residence, using funds made available by the loan guarantees.

So in a supreme act of chutzpah, Shamir turned to the U.S. and asked Bush to provide the funds to make a mockery of Bush's own land-for-peace policy. Bush, anxious to ensure that the international conference his Secretary of State had labored so hard to create would not be immediately undermined by Israeli settlement policy, requested that the issue of loan guarantees be put off for a few months. Instead, Israel, together with its supposedly invincible domestic Jewish lobby (most notably, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC), demanded that the $10 billion loan guarantee be granted immediately, and began to threaten to use its clout to override a potential presidential veto.

No wonder Bush lashed out against a lobby that thought of itself as powerful enough simply to ignore the opposition of the President. Even if AIPAC had been right, it acted in a way that played into the worst fantasies of anti-Semites, who imagined that Jews are a powerful cabal able to manipulate the powers of the world.

"Why should we as Jews have to worry about such anti-Semitic fantasies?" one argument goes. "After all, we are just playing the game the way everyone else does,



Will Shamir ever agree to exchange land for peace?

using the American political system to influence political outcomes." This, in fact, was the substance of Bush's letter to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which he sent to reassure the Jewish world after his first denunciation of AIPAC was interpreted as anti-Semitic (in outcome, if not in intention). But even though Bush may have been flirting with anti-Semitism, let's acknowledge to ourselves that AIPAC's initial response is itself a bit less innocent than the "just-playing-the-game" defense seems to suggest. Polls quickly revealed that 86 percent of the American public supported Bush on delaying consideration of the loans. If AIPAC thought it could credibly threaten to override Bush's veto, it was relying on precisely the reputation of immense political power that Jews later branded Bush an anti-Semite for criticizing.

What does this power derive from? Certainly not from the abundance of Jewish voters in the country—after all, we are less than 3 percent of the U.S. population. True, in the areas where we are concentrated, we are politically important beyond our numbers because we are highly organized and tend to be among the most active campaigners. But in other areas where there are relatively few Jews, the power of AIPAC depends on our ability to bring in funds to elect a candidate who supports Israel. It may well be argued that this is a legitimate form of political pressure in our electoral system. But most people feel that a system that gives disproportionate influence to those with money is corrupt and illegitimate, and are eager to see the entire system of campaign financing reformed. Hence, they are unlikely to be overly impressed with the "everybody does it" defense. Jews have a "right" to play this game just as manipulatively as everyone else; we even have a right to be proud that our community is willing to give its money to achieve communal ends. And we have every right to be angry at those who wish to manipulate anti-Semitism against us for doing what everybody else does. But is it *wise* and is it *right* for us to be using our financial resources to buy Congressional support we could not win on the basis of our arguments alone?

My answer is, "sometimes." But if we are going to play this kind of hardball, we'd better be very careful to use our financial and political capital only when we really need it for very important goals. Saving Jews from Soviet anti-Semitism would be such a goal—but if and only if we were simultaneously pushing to let Soviet Jews into the United States. The fact is that the Israeli government and American Jewish organizations wanted a ceiling on the number of Soviet immigrants to the U.S. precisely so that Jews would be *forced* to go to Israel to settle. If what we are talking about is saving Jewish lives, we should be pushing with equal vigor to eliminate U.S. quotas on Soviet Jews.

By sending a message to Israel that its policies must change, Bush's request for a postponement has already had a salutary effect. There are many Israeli centrists who have believed the message of Shamir and the American-Jewish leaders that there will be no cost for continuing the Occupation. Many of those centrists would be inclined to shift toward the Labor party if they came to believe that the U.S. was serious about withholding financial help until Israel ended the Occupation. If the U.S. were to give that message in an unambiguous way, Israelis would respond. That's a plausible reading of a poll conducted in August by the Smith Research Center. Fifty-seven percent of Israeli Jews of voting age agreed that Israel should stop expanding settlements at least temporarily in order to win the loan guarantees from the U.S. Equally intriguing was the answer to the following question: "If the U.S. would promise, for territorial concessions, that Israel would receive security guarantees, military intelligence exchanges, loans for immigrants and more military aid; but if Israel did not agree to territorial concessions, and the U.S. would not give the loan guarantees and reduce military and economic aid—what in these conditions should Israel do?" Thirty-four percent answered, "Refuse the American conditions," while thirty-six percent answered, "Accept American conditions and concede territories."

On the one hand, these kinds of poll results should give pause to anyone who believes that a simple linkage of aid to territorial compromise will automatically produce the desired result. And here a little coercion may be worse than none at all. If the U.S. were contemplating the kind of economic sanctions that it imposed on South Africa *(lehavdeel)*, it might actually have the leverage to force a change in policy. But lesser steps may in fact produce a right-wing backlash that would only strengthen the most intransigent elements in Israel. Moreover, there's another consequence to be feared in making the goal of economic coercion simply the freezing of the settlements: namely, that Israel will give in on the freeze issue, seeming to have taken a monumental step toward accommodating the U.S., while nevertheless continuing the Occupation and stonewalling all proposals for exchanging West Bank land for peace at the Middle East peace conference. For all these reasons, I've been advocating that the central strategy for influencing Israeli policy ought to be something more positive: that Bush propose a massive Middle East Marshall Plan for democratic reconstruction—to be funded by the U.S., Europe, Japan, and the oil-rich Arab states—that would include $15 billion per year for Israel and $5 billion per year for a new demilitarized Palestinian state. This plan would be implemented if and only if Israel in fact cooperates in the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state. A promise of that kind of funding would give a powerful political card to the Israeli peace movement to play in the next Israeli election.

But in the meantime, Bush doesn't even publicly support the notion of Palestinian national self-determination, and he is not prepared to advance a full vision of what a Middle East peace would actually look like, much less to use economic power or promises to achieve it. In the real world, we have Bush making tentative symbolic gestures to get across to Israel the message that it ought to freeze settlements and exchange land for peace. Though I believe that this is neither the best strategy nor the right demand, it nevertheless seems appropriate to support Bush for two reasons: 1) Bush's move makes it harder for Israelis to imagine that the Occupation will never have any economic consequences that might affect their own personal lives. 2) On the face of it, it is morally intolerable to give American money that we know will be used to free up other monies that will go to strengthen the Occupation.

How, then, should we deal with the needs of Soviet Jews? I propose the creation of an international agency or an agency of the U.S. government that would finance individuals seeking housing or employment *inside* the Green Line. The U.S. should offer to back loan guarantees or, even better, extend direct aid to that agency. Individuals and small groups of Soviet Jews would apply for the money, and would be required to fill out a "social environmental" impact report that showed why the project would not be used directly or indirectly to strengthen Israel's hold on the West Bank. The granting agency would have no

Announcing a New and Revised Edition (1991) of

TIKKUN Editor Michael Lerner's

SURPLUS POWERLESSNESS

The Psychodynamics of Everyday Life ... and the Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation



"A trenchant analysis of the culture of individualism."—Professor Robert Bellah, author of *Habits of the Heart*

"Michael Lerner combines the insights of depth psychology with his firsthand experience as a psychotherapist for American working people."—Rollo May, M.D., Psychoanalyst

"One of the most important contributions to social thought since Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse."—Professor Harold Jacobs, Department of Sociology SUNY New Paltz

Paperback $15
Humanities Press International, Inc.
165 First Avenue, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716
3 Henrietta St., London, U.K. WC2E 8LU

connection to the government and would not allow any of its funds to be used by the government. We in the U.S., both as individuals and through our government, would aim to finance this loan agency.

This is a strategy that would show our commitment to Soviet immigrants while simultaneously blocking the objectional parts of Shamir's settlement plans. If implemented in a serious way, the program would send a powerful message to the Shamir government, could not be confused with moral indifference to the plight of Soviet Jews, and might give the Israeli people more incentive to press Shamir to change his negotiating stance vis-à-vis the Middle East peace conference. This may be the right moment to insist that aid be linked to peace—but we must do so in a way that is adequately sensitive to the survival needs of the Jewish people. In the roundtable on linkage in this issue of *Tikkun,* David Saperstein claims that popular U.S. support for Israel is weaker than we might have thought. All the more reason for supporters of Israel to insist that it change its policies immediately, so that those who truly care about Israel's survival can be united once again in resisting all who would seek to discredit Israel or undermine American enthusiasm for the Jewish state.

Watching the "pro-Israel lobby" play fast and loose with Jewish credibility in the U.S. brought home to me a sobering reality: The Jewish establishment is not only without any sort of moral compass when dealing with Israel; it is also simply incapable of acting rationally to defend Jewish interests. It is willing to tie the credibility and security of the Jewish people to a right-wing policy that violates the best moral precepts of the Jewish people, and places the Jewish people and Israel in conflict with the most positive development of the past half century, namely the worldwide movement toward democracy, human rights, peace, and reconciliation.

Right-wingers like to dismiss us on the Jewish Left as idealists and dreamers. In fact, we are the only ones who are free enough of narrow, nationalist fantasies to be able to look at the actual situation of Jews in the world, to understand that Jewish self-interest at this historical moment requires paying attention to the interests and concerns of *others.* We are in a unique historical moment in which there is a convergence of morality and self-interest. The established leadership of the Jewish world both in the U.S. and Israel, the inheritors of the psychic wounds of centuries of oppression, cannot grasp the unique dynamics of the present period, and as a result are willing to lead the Jewish people into isolation, moral disintegration, and possible self-destruction. It has fallen to us Jewish liberals and progressives, both in the U.S. and Israel, to be the voice capable of defending the common good and welfare of the Jewish people.

Middle East Peace Conference

Don't be surprised if the Middle East Peace Conference leads nowhere quickly. It's not hard to imagine a scenario in which several Arab states, after the ceremonial opening session, are willing to agree to exchange land for peace but find that Israel refuses. It is equally likely that, if serious negotiations are initiated to resolve the struggle with Syria or Jordan, a stumbling block will appear when the West Bank is thrown into the deal. Likud supporters will argue that the Arab states are ruining the possibility of peace because they are not willing to conclude separate agreements with Israel until the Palestinian issue is dealt with also. But even if the Arab states *do* abandon the Palestinians (something they've been doing for years, since the Palestinian issue is more of a club to beat Israel with than a deep and serious concern for the likes of Syria's Assad), this will not advantage Israel. Peace treaties that do not provide for national self-determination for the Palestinians are simply promissory notes for more pain for Israel in the future.

"Well at least we've got everybody talking," says one popular line of thinking. WRONG. The key to lasting peace for Israel is the Palestinians; yet by prohibiting the PLO's presence at the bargaining table, and precluding the participation of Palestinian leaders who live in Jerusalem, Shamir has guaranteed that any agreement that *does* emerge will not have the authority of the one organization whose participation could actually deliver peace. In a debate with me on national television in October, Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, kept on insisting that we should not try to "prejudge the negotiations" by asking Israel to agree to exchange land for peace, since that is a matter "to be worked out by the parties at the table." But the key party—the party that the Palestinian people would choose to represent themselves—is not even allowed to be at the table.

In fact, the dynamics of the peace process will put incredible pressure on Israel to make concessions where it should not—on the Golan Heights—instead of where it should—the West Bank and Gaza. Israel has a good strategic argument for making sure that the Syrians are never again able to use the Golan as a launching place for missiles aimed at Israel. While Syria has a claim to regain sovereignty, it must do so under conditions that do not require that existing Israeli settlements be dismantled and that ensure a strict demilitarization, to be supervised by an international peacekeeping force. A similar demilitarization should accompany an exchange of land for peace and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

The worldwide energy for democratic reform, the waning of military conflict and confrontation, and the abandonment of struggles of the past, symbolized most dramatically by President Bush's recent moves toward nuclear de-escalation, and Gorbachev's reciprocal moves, have created a climate of hopefulness and possibility. Israelis are not immune to these hopes—and the convening of the peace conference has value to the extent that it fans those hopes. But absent a plausible vision of what peace could look like, Israelis will instead focus on the day-to-day bargaining, and if Shamir holds his ground and offers little, the whole enterprise will soon seem to be going nowhere. The Israeli public will likely soon revert to its by now almost instinctive cynicism and despair. Negotiations, far from leading to an irreversible process toward peace, may produce instead an even deeper conviction on the part of the Israeli public that nothing can ever change.

By the time you read this the opening session of the conference will have taken place. Our hope is that President Bush will have used the occasion to put forward a detailed vision of a just settlement, including full peace and mutual recognition between Israel and the Arab states (including an end to the Arab boycott and the vicious anti-Semitic propaganda in Arab schools and media), explicitly endorsing the notion of a demilitarized Palestinian entity on the West Bank, and linking that both to a military pact with Israel that assures Israel's security and to an economic package of incentives such as we at *Tikkun* have been proposing ($15 billion a year for Israel, $5 billion a year for the demilitarized Palestinian state). Articulating that vision clearly (rather than falling back into the mushiness of a position that says the U.S. will leave the solution to the parties themselves and will not attempt to pressure any side) is the only way to counter the tendency toward getting so lost in the details that the spirit of possibility is crushed. So if Bush has not done this by the time you read this editorial, we should be pressing him to do so—because only through such leadership on the part of the U.S. can we hope to break the logic of cynicism and despair in Israel that will, in turn, lessen the pressure on Shamir to take positive steps toward peace. Similar pressure should be focused on the Arab states, which have been major obstacles to a settlement in the past, and which may be more interested in winning Bush's favor by showing up at the conference than in taking substantive steps to assure Israel that peace is really possible.

As loyal supporters of Israel and the Jewish people, we want to ensure that once Israel *is* willing to grant Palestinian rights, it will face a world ready to rectify the many wrongs that have been visited upon the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Black Anti-Semitism

We've spent many years explaining the conditions and circumstances that have produced Black anti-Semitism. And we will return to that theme in the future. But at the moment we are sick and tired of saying things that might be heard as apologies or explanations. We have plenty of compassion for the oppression of African-Americans. But we also have a lot of rage at those who have participated in or abetted the latest outrages in New York City's Crown Heights.

The random attacks on Jewish homes and the lynching of Yankel Rosenbaum cannot be forgiven. Perhaps Richard Goldstein was right when he argued in the *Village Voice* that this outrage was not quite a pogrom in the sense that our grandparents knew in Eastern Europe, because in this case the state did not stand by neutrally or encourage the attack on the Jews. But the murderous assault on Rosenbaum was part of an organized campaign against Jews, and it was unforgivable racism.

Too often this Black racism against Jews has been credited and supported by Black intellectuals on university campuses. All too often legitimate criticisms of Israel get misused as a cover for the anti-Semitic drivel that these Blacks picked up as the enduring legacy of Western Christian societies. The garbage spewed by Leonard Jeffries at the City College of New York can do profound damage—it can make many Blacks feel that they have some "legitimacy" when they engage in anti-Semitic attacks.

Jews and our allies who participate in liberal and progressive movements have a special responsibility to oppose manifestations of racism and anti-Semitism, even when articulated by Blacks whom one might otherwise be inclined to support. (See Jim Sleeper's analysis of racial politics in New York on page 43 in this issue of *Tikkun*.) Just as women faced the difficult task of confronting sexism in the antiwar movement, it's our task to confront and disrupt anti-Semitism even within progressive movements that we otherwise support. To aid that process, we at *Tikkun* have created a handbook on anti-Semitism in liberal and progressive circles and how to challenge it (available through our offices for $6.00).

We should not subordinate the struggle against anti-Semitism to our desire to be accepted or loved by others in the movement who don't take this issue seriously (particularly fellow Jews who will tell us that we are overreacting or being sectarian to raise these issues). But at the same time we must also be careful to avoid the trap of the Jewish Right—focusing only on anti-Semitism while ignoring the persistent poverty, racism, and oppression that face African Americans and other groups. If anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools, it gains

credibility most forcefully at moments when rational political alternatives seem to be failing and when despair begins to overtake collective political consciousness. Because of this dynamic, the struggle against anti-Semitism cannot be separated from the struggle for social justice.

Tikkun *at Five*

It's a good time to be a Jewish liberal. Our analyses are understood to be more relevant today than five years ago, when we started *Tikkun* as "the liberal alternative to *Commentary* and the voices of Jewish conservatism." For the past five years, we have been engaged in a two-front struggle. In the Jewish world, we have called for a renewed commitment to the prophetic tradition in Judaism, meaning not just the normal array of prophetic quotes to be ritually repeated in synagogues on ceremonial occasions, but rather a serious transformation of Jewish life. Many American Jews have felt that in order to find ethical and spiritual wholeness they had to look outside the Jewish world, since the Jewish world they grew up in seemed vulgarly materialistic, anti-spiritual, anti-intellectual, antidemocratic, conformist, and intolerant of all forms of dissent (particularly on Israel).

We envision a very different Jewish world, one that reclaims the passion for justice and compassion that were the hallmarks of traditional Judaism. Just as the prophets began with a self-critical appraisal of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion, so would a serious prophetic Judaism today insist that the Jewish people stop trying to "make it" by the criteria of capitalist society. Instead, it would call upon Jews to rededicate themselves to the religious task articulated in Torah: to be witnesses to the fact that the governing force in the universe is the force that makes possible liberation and transformation to a new moral order. One can be a secular Jew and still be a witness to this possibility, just as one can be overtly religious and fail to be a witness to it. Yet in the Jewish tradition, it is precisely through *this possibility,* the possibility of possibility, that God identifies Her-/Himself to Moses (*"eheyeh asher eheyeh"*—I shall be whom and how I shall be) as the supreme force in the universe. Resisting the cynicism and pessimism that pervaded the experience of slaves in Egypt (and that has pervaded the experience of all human beings subjected to every form of oppression since then), the Bible affirmed that the world can be radically altered, that power does not have to have dominion, that what ought to be *can* be—because there is a power in the universe that makes for that possibility. This is what it really means to believe in God—it means to be witnesses to a history that has led us to believe that the ultimate power in the world is that which makes possible this healing, repair, and transformation, this *tikkun*. Our task as Jews is to join with others of all races and faiths to become partners with God in the transformation of the world.

For us as Jews there are two areas in which healing must take precedence. First, we must repair our dealings with the Palestinian people, whose oppression we never intended, but who are nevertheless the victims of the Jewish pursuit of security after centuries of oppression. We need not romanticize the Palestinians, or approve of the viciousness and immorality of the PLO, or pretend that the Palestinians were simply innocent bystanders. They are, indeed, part of an Arab civilization that for centuries oppressed Jews (whose descendants now constitute the majority of the Israeli right wing), and who, when they had power in the pre-1948 period, did everything possible to prevent *us* from achieving security or national self-determination. But we do need to recognize that the Jewish people are no longer powerless, and that the state that exercises power in the name of the Jewish people has been involved in torture (see Stanley Cohen's article, page 23), expulsions, unjust systematic imprisonments, beatings, killings, and other forms of oppression of the Palestinian people. A prophetic Judaism must fight against this desecration of God's name and insist that Jews not only do everything in our power to get Israel to change its policies, but also commit ourselves to healing some of the pain that has been caused in our name. Yet the complications of the task are great. For we must also commit ourselves to healing the pain of so many Israelis who have been forced to live in fear for decades, surrounded by a hostile Arab world bent on destroying Israel, and faced with a Palestinian people whose anger is justified but who often acts in ways that reinforce the fear that nothing Israelis can do will be enough to satisfy its demands. Compassion for Palestinians cannot replace a deep and abiding compassion for our own people as well.

Our second pressing task is to repair the damage done to women through centuries of patriarchal practices that have distorted our religious and communal lives. This means more than formal equality in the existing institutions of Jewish life—it also means a fundamental rethinking of our most basic categories and assumptions, to allow into our cultural and spiritual lives the creativity and insights of women. To do this in a way that does not invalidate the experience of men or the rich contributions that they have made as they have attempted to hear God's voice throughout our history will require new depths of compassion.

The prophetic Judaism that we seek leads us to a new vision of a democratic Jewish community, with leadership

no longer chosen on the basis of who has or knows how to raise the most money, but rather on the basis of moral commitment, intellectual depth, and spiritual insight. Such a community will be open and accepting of lesbians and gays and committed to fighting against all forms of heterosexism. It will recognize that some of the most creative energies coming into the Jewish world may come from converts or "Jews by choice." It will be open to sharing its understanding and its spiritual insights with others, welcoming those who wish to convert, and willing to consider ways that it can learn from the spiritual and religious traditions of others. *Tikkun*'s unique blend of "identity politics," with a commitment to universalism and values that transcend the specific experiences of any given community, has helped recredit a prophetic politics in the Jewish world.

But a prophetic Judaism also requires that we go beyond the Jewish world, and that *as Jews* we be involved in the struggle for social justice, peace, and saving the planet from ecological destruction. Prophetic Judaism must continually contend with a world in which millions are homeless, in which tens of millions of children starve to death each year, in which a small percentage of the world's population consumes most of the world's resources, and in which, under the guise of "the triumph of the free market," the principles of selfishness, me-firstism, domination, and manipulation of others have become the guiding principles of daily life. *Tikkun olam* means consciously struggling against this world.

On the one hand, that struggle has been given an immense boost by the destruction of communist totalitarianism in Eastern Europe. Until recently, the apologists of selfishness could point to the Soviet Union as the supposedly inevitable consequence of what happens when people try to shape their lives collectively according to some higher principle of cooperation. And there were always some people on the Left who played along by pretending that the Soviet Union had something in common with their ultimate vision. Thus, as long as the Soviet empire endured, any talk of a democratic socialism was necessarily doomed to defeat.

On the other hand, democratic socialism is not an adequate vision of the kind of world that we must struggle for. The language and ideology of Marxism and of most of the liberal and progressive movements have been too narrowly economistic, focused only on the dimensions of life concerning economic entitlements and political rights. In fact, the Democratic party and the liberal and progressive social-change movements have been failing in the past two decades largely because they don't have room in their conceptual scheme to recognize that most people in the West, while still worried about these traditional liberal issues, face another form of oppression that is even deeper: the frustration of their need to have loving relationships embedded in ethically grounded and spiritually sensitive communities of meaning.

So healing the larger world requires that we heal the social-change movements themselves. It's not that the struggles for economic and political justice, for reproductive choice and for an end to sexist and heterosexist oppression, for ecological sanity, and for peace are unimportant. On the contrary, any effort to heal the world that did not involve these central transformations would be pointless. But the sad truth is that these movements have been losing. At the moment, it is only *Tikkun* that has been able to provide a credible analysis of why these movements continue to lose. Our point is very simple: Most Americans feel terrible about their lives, but do not understand why. Liberals and progressives come along and tell them that everything is fine for most people, but that there are some small groups of people who have been left out and that it's now time to rectify the injustices these other, excluded people face. The underlying assumption is this: Most of you have had a good and fair chance to create a decent life for yourselves, and if you didn't do it, it's only your own fault and you have nobody to blame but yourself. In fact, you are being selfish if you don't now do something for these other people who didn't have the same fine opportunities that you had. But meanwhile, the people hearing this message feel terrible about their lives, and they understand the implied message of the liberals to be, you deserve what you got. No wonder, then, that most people turn away from the liberal social-change movements, feeling that these liberals don't care about their lives or their pain.

It may take generations for the liberal and progressive social-change movements to get the message, but until they refocus their attention on **the deprivation of meaning** they will get nowhere. The pain in people's lives comes from a social order that has undermined love and commitment, created narcissistic individuals who are incapable of sustaining long-term relationships, produced a marketplace that teaches the value of manipulation and domination rather than of cooperation and caring, and has generated an ethos of materialism and self-interest and a psychology of self-blaming that destroy the values necessary to sustain community. The right wing has attempted to address this question by providing various substitute gratifications, pseudo-communities built around authoritarian religious or nationalist fantasies. The Right has succeeded because liberals ignore the hunger for ethically and spiritually grounded communities and the desire for authentic connection to others; instead, the Left has relegated them to the realm of

religion or psychology, unable to see that these are the central issues motivating contemporary politics.

Tikkun has been attempting to develop a politics of compassion that would be a model for the liberal and progressive forces. But we have no immediate optimism on this front. We've begun to create local *Tikkun* discussion groups and we attempt to intervene through our education arm, the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ), but we believe it may take generations before the Left is really ready to fundamentally rethink the narrow assumptions about human nature that underlie its current politics.

When we started we were surrounded by those who told us that there was no chance that we could succeed, that trying to be both Jewish and liberal would alienate people in both worlds. Five years later we are one of the most widely quoted intellectual magazines, and one of the largest circulation Jewish magazines in the country. And we figure centrally in debates not only on Jewish matters, but on contemporary politics as well. So now we are told that it was inevitable, that we simply came at the right time and filled the right niche—though nobody said that when we first started.

We still have persistent financial problems. Most magazines of this sort have an organizational support (*Commentary* has the American Jewish Committee) or some wealthy donors (we ourselves were able to start in part because of the generous support of our former publisher Nan Fink). But we don't fit into any existing funding niche. We are "too Jewish" for the networks of young liberal donors; "too progressive" and too confrontational for the Jewish donors who might give to other organizations precisely because they stay away from direct political challenges to existing Israeli policy in the Territories; "too intellectual" for the new generation of givers that wants to see action but doesn't acknowledge the need for a new intellectual framework from which social action might flow and through which it might be replenished after initial activist energies have been somewhat depleted; "too activist" for others. We've accomplished a lot in five years. We have managed to get the media to acknowledge that there is some dissent in the Jewish world. But we've not yet succeeded in getting them to realize that, when poll data show most Israelis and American Jews ready to consider exchanges of land for peace, that is evidence for the hypothesis that *Tikkun* is more representative of the sentiments of these constituencies than is the official Jewish leadership.

The conferences we've held in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Jerusalem have been important and memorable political events for the thousands of people who have attended. The intellectual and political space we've helped open up has benefited tens of thousands of Jews who will never read the magazine.

We see ourselves as part of a powerful Jewish renewal movement in the U.S., working cooperatively (though not always in 100 percent agreement) with a wide and diverse range of groups: the New Israel Fund, Americans for Peace Now, the Jewish Peace Lobby, P'nai Or, the Shalom Center, Shomrey Adama, the New Jewish Agenda, Oz ve Shalom and Netivot Shalom, feminist and gay and lesbian synagogues and collectives in the Jewish world, and groups of progressives who work in the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements in Judaism. We have not tried to function as a newsletter or publicity vehicle for these various organizations of Jewish renewal, and sometimes we've had to resist pressures from our allies in these movements who wished *Tikkun* would function *more* as a cheerleader and less as an independent voice. Nevertheless, *Tikkun* has been a forum in which their thinking could be promoted (and sometimes lovingly criticized), and since our readership extends far beyond the numbers that any of these groups have been able to amass on their own, we play a useful role in bringing their ideas to constituencies who might not otherwise have been exposed to them.

There are down moments—particularly the continual frustration of having to say "no" to hundreds of manuscripts we receive every month, many of them top-notch. Because *Tikkun* is for many people a unique community, a kind of homecoming into a progressive and compassionate Judaism that they hoped would exist but never found before, it never occurs to some of our subscribers when they send articles or letters to us just how intense the space crunch has become. We want to continue to receive these articles—and in every issue of the magazine some of them *do* get published. But hundreds more get turned down, and I usually don't even have the time to write a personal letter explaining why we didn't have enough space.

Then there are the financial problems. We will be raising the cost of the magazine at the beginning of January to six dollars per issue (subscriptions will be $31 and renewals will be $28). And a second price adjustment may be necessary in 1993. If our readers continue to donate at the level that you did in 1989 and 1990, then, with these price hikes, we should be able to sustain the magazine in the coming years. But please keep up the donations (asking for money may come easily to some, but personally I *hate* doing this part of my job even though I know it's necessary, and even though in fact I'm really offering people an opportunity to do a good deed, a mitzvah, about which they can rightly be proud).

(Continued on p. 88)

The Jewish relationship to Christmas continues to befuddle many American Jews. As Stephen Mitchell makes clear in his recent book *The Gospel According to Jesus,* there are undeniably beautiful elements in the teachings of Jesus that can be seen as a continuation of some strands in traditional biblical thought, without in any way accepting religious claims about Jesus as messiah or son of God or even as prophet. On the other hand, there is a coerced character to celebrating Christmas that makes it difficult for any Jew to claim that this is a "free choice." Not in a world where every institution seems to demand that you participate in the holiday, in which the media and the public streets assault you with the message that this celebration is what *everyone* is doing (and *everyone* is having fun doing so); not in a world where the implicit message given by many non-Jews to Jews is that they are somehow being party-poopers or withholding or non-communal if they hesitate to participate; not in a world in which Jews have felt so much pressure to conform to the societal norms that they have tried to transform their own Chanukah holiday (a celebration of our liberation struggle against Greek imperialism) into a substitute Christmas complete with gifts and greeting cards (which traditionally was the custom for Purim, not Chanukah).

Many non-Jews have their own problems with the forced consumption and forced merriment—we at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health used to run "holiday stress" groups to help people deal with the well-known rise in depression and suicide that typically accompanies this season. Yet perhaps the best argument religious Christians give against Jews in Christmas is this:



"We are engaged in a struggle against the commercialization and secularization of our religious occasion, and you weigh in on the wrong side when you join those who argue that it's not really a religious holiday but merely a family occasion."

What do *you* think? We invite our readers to share their views with us, and we will print some of the letters we receive.

The TIKKUN Anthology, over 500 pages of some of the most exciting articles and debates in the magazine, including essays, fiction and poetry from Abba Eban, Peter Gabel, Annie Dillard, Woody Allen, Cornel West, David Mamet, Todd Gitlin, Judith Plaskow, Rachel Adler, Marge Piercy, Arthur Waskow, Benny Morris, Christopher Lasch, Allen Ginsberg, Jackson Lears, Martin Jay, Carol Gilligan, Jessica Benjamin, Susannah Heschel and more. Paperback: $19.85; hardback: $42.85 (includes postage). Check or VISA/Mastercard info to *Tikkun,* 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619; or call (510) 482-0805.

Neo-Nazis attacking foreign immigrants in East Germany may give new relevance to *Tikkun*'s criticisms of the way the organized Jewish world stood by without protest when Germany was reunited. We opposed unification because we saw no reason to believe the German public had been adequately educated about the destructive dynamics of German nationalism and xenophobia. We wish history were proving us wrong.

Free Associations Free Associations Free Associations Free

Elliott Abrams, neoconservative champion and son-in-law of *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz, pleaded guilty October 7th to misdemeanor charges of withholding information from Congress about secret efforts to aid the Contras. The pattern is now familiar: in court, a highly placed Republican administration figure, now a confessed criminal, pleads guilty to a lesser crime than he committed, promises to cooperate in future investigations, and then goes outside to the public in a very different tone. As the *New York Times* reported on October 8, "Mr. Abrams sounded unrepentant as he read a brief statement in which he expressed pride in his government service." Administration officials, meanwhile, rush to his defense (a typical comment came from the vice president's chief of staff who said it was "disgraceful that someone who served his country so well for eight years in government is repaid in this fashion"). With Oliver North roaming the country as a hero, all charges dropped, and other convicted criminals publicly defiant, we may talk of a "culture of criminality" that the neo-cons have helped legitimize every bit as destructive to the future of this country as the "culture of poverty" that neo-cons professed to discover as the explanation for why poverty persisted among the underclass.

BELOVED COMMUNITY

The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford
by Casey Nelson Blake
Foreword by Alan Trachtenberg

"More than a contribution to historical scholarship; it is also a contribution to social criticism in its own right, one that will continue to be read long after most other studies of these authors are forgotten."
Christopher Lasch

381 pp., 6 illus. $34.95 cloth, $12.95 paper
Cultural Studies of the United States

▼

available at bookstores or from
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
Post Office Box 2288
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27515-2288

Toll-free orders: 1-800-848-6224

Norman Podhoretz, meanwhile, has a new cause: denying that date rape is a serious problem. In the October, 1991 issue of *Commentary,* Podhoretz rightfully criticizes Andrea Dworkin and others who seem to be suggesting that *all* heterosexual sex is rape, but then suggests that much of what is called date rape is really a normal product of "the war between the sexes" and "the ever restless masculine sex drive," which is misunderstood by women, who are "ruled by much more quiescent erotic impulses." Podhoretz believes in a "masculine need to conquer," so he ridicules the notion that "no" means "no," and warns that the success of the now growing campaign to educate college students about the dangers of (overt and subtle) coercion may lead to a new generation of male wimps and impotence, plus women who can't find emotionally attractive heterosexual partners. But then again, this has always been the psychic undergirding of so much of neo-conservatism: the fear of women's power, the fear that women's wishes and desires may have to be given equal weight with those of men. Even the Reagan-Bush counterrevolution has not succeeded in stifling what is certainly one of the most important revolutions of the contemporary world: women's liberation.

The almost universal depression among liberals, progressives and feminists after the confirmation of Clarence Thomas was a predictable outcome. For a moment, when the Senate was forced to publicly sexual consider harassment charges by Anita Hill, tens of millions of Americans allowed themselves to feel renewed hope that something fundamental might change in our society. But once the Republican Senators began their disgraceful attacks on Professor Hill, Senate Democrats and liberal media people fell into a deferential "objective" mode of inquiry—and ignored the political meaning of a woman being forced to prove to the almost-all-boys club of the U.S. Senate that she was not "fantasizing" (a chilling illustration of why it is difficult to challenge sexual harassment). We were back in the energy-sapping and hope-squashing dynamics that lead most people to disdain politics and turn to religion, sports, or personal life to find some sense of meaning. In fact, once it became clear that no one at the Senate hearings was going to use the occasion to transcend the mind-deadening logic of "getting the facts" to face the larger issue of male domination in society, the joyful optimism that had surged through the society earlier in the week turned into despair. When polls indicated that a majority of American women supported Thomas and disbelieved Hill, they were reflecting that despair: Many women who might have been tempted by a wave of feminist power to question their own lives and the ways they, too, had been exploited or harassed in a male-dominated order, by not allowing themselves to believe Hill's allegations, enacted a dutiful obedience to their oppression. The entire episode demonstrated why we need an explicitly feminist party in America—though hopefully one that avoids a "gender politics" similar to the kind of "identity politics" that led so many Blacks to support Thomas simply because of his race.

Sisyphus After the Putsch

Todd Gitlin

One catches one's breath daily in the face of headlines. It has been said that the only sensible medium for writing about world events now is daily journalism. One of the essential characteristics of this moment in world history is that its meanings are opaque, confused, in flux. And yet one thinks in the present, mired in hand-me-down categories. We want a Hollywood movie, happy ending and all, but have to be satisfied with snapshots. Photographs for an album: Yeltsin on a tank in place of the Bolshevik attack on the Winter Palace. Western political culture is so deeply immersed in the imagery of revolution that even the triumphalist Right shares it, except with the terms reversed—now anticommunists are seen to be cheerily coasting down the snowy slopes of virtue, and every Free World exercise in cold-war paranoia over the last half century is retrofitted so as to seem brilliant. History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as miniseries.

The collective imagination fails to think deeply enough about the meanings of the transformation in Europe. Communism is dead, long live—what? We stare at enormities and find ourselves trapped in prefabricated vocabularies of overused words: "crisis," "historic," "victory," "democratic," "free markets." But if any chain of events is worthy of extremities of rhetoric, surely it would have to be the collapse of communism, the unraveling of the Soviet Union, the failed coup. The transformation of Eastern Europe and the USSR, 1989–91 and continuing, has to be one of the momentous turns in Western history since 1789. But just as one would have been hard-pressed to grasp the significance of the French Revolution from the vantage of 1791, or the significance of the Russian Revolution from the vantage of 1919, so a certain modesty is called for at this moment. Many of the pundits who today confidently proclaim that the future belongs to democracy were quite convinced a mere five years ago that the Soviet Union was an empire built to last.

Todd Gitlin, professor of sociology at UC Berkeley, is the author of several books, including The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage *(Bantam, 1987). His first novel will be published next year by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, and he is working on a study of American political culture, the national identity crisis, and political incorrectness after the cold war.*

All this said, there is something almost too neat about the breakdown of communism taking place just in time to round out the end of the twentieth century. (It will be all the neater if the Chinese Party-State joins the collapse in time for the third millennium.) Conveniently enough for those who aspire to historical glibness, the postcommunist upheaval began exactly two centuries after the French Revolution. It is reasonable to wonder whether these two ferocious centuries are being, at long last, closed out—in the name of some not-yet-fathomable new start. This is the significance of the failed three-day putsch. Empty in rhetoric, feeble in execution, it demonstrated that the route back to the past is foreclosed. Because the coup failed, it now looks like nothing more than a lament. A certain dire history did, in fact, end. We are to be forgiven for hoping—if not expecting—that the history ushered in by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen might now resume, after a long and dreadful detour, along the humanist track from which Jacobin terror diverted it.

Two legacies of the French Revolution have long fought each other and again have just confronted each other in Moscow—and, even more, in St. Petersburg, the former Leningrad. On the one hand, there was the popular revolt against arbitrary power. This is the imagery incarnate in David's paintings, Wordsworth's bliss, the saga of the demolition of the Bastille. During the golden moments of the last two years, we saw this imagery spring back to life in the triumphant crowds on Prague's Wenceslas Square, summoning Václav Havel to the Castle; and again in the smaller but no less dedicated crowds of Russians passing chocolate to the junta's troops at Russia's "White House." True, only small numbers of citizens stood at the Moscow barricades fraternizing with the troops. But they were also the living conscience of the armed forces—and consequently were able to keep this August amazingly free of guns.

During those amazing days of August, the tradition of popular democratic action against terror rose up against the other legacy of the modern revolutionary tradition, that of the Jacobin party: the fusion of power and reason in the hands of small groups who take upon themselves a responsibility for History in the name of Humanity, the People, the Proletariat, or any other suitably large abstraction. The twentieth century



Soviet crowds greet tanks with flowers outside the Russian Parliament in Moscow after the failure of the coup.

is incomprehensible unless we appreciate the dead weight of this second tradition. The Jacobin party, modified by Marxian theory, then polished and organized by Lenin as a machinery for the seizure of power, was transmogrified into the Communist Party-State, a machinery for hypothetically endless mobilization and rule. It derived its force from the troika of coup d'etat, state autocracy, and a command economy. Since history, according to this design, was nothing more or less than class struggle on a grand scale, the Party gave itself an unexpiring alibi for whatever mix of terror, deception, and corruption it declared that the class struggle required from moment to moment. In the name of the public good, private life was usurped. In the name of the social nature of human life, society was pulverized. In the name of science, paranoia was elevated to high principle.

Stupid from the corrosive combination of arrogance and cynicism, the Communist parties, once they took power, largely succeeded in dismantling and discrediting what there was of liberal and democratic traditions. When the terror thawed after Stalin's death, what slowly came back to life was everything that had been suppressed. In Eastern Europe, wherever democratic, liberal, and trade-unionist ideas had a certain lineage, a fabric of civil society was woven by dissidents—intellectuals, workers, some religious believers. But in the heartland of communism, the worst ideas gained the greatest credit from all the efforts of the Party-State to discredit them. Theocratic, racist, nationalist, anti-Semitic, and obscurantist ideas loomed as compelling alternatives to the Party-State. (Memo to today's anti-rationalists: Cast off the Enlightenment and you are staring at Yugoslavia.) Ideas had, after all, long since become the thinnest of veils over the brute facts of power and privilege. The regime had become a school in limitless cynicism. Now the apparatchiks are gravitating to new careers in power by intoning the rhetoric of the hour. With ease, breakaways from a crumbling Party have resurrected their careers by reinventing themselves as nationalists—as in Georgia, the Ukraine, and Serbia. Collectors of Party loot learned to preserve their ill-gotten gains by declaring themselves instant capitalists. Every humane idea—planning, equality, international solidarity—that Leninism had endorsed and travestied has been popularly discredited. Nothing condemns the three-quarters of a century of Leninism in power more decisively than the paltriness of what remains of its most decent ideals in the political culture of the Second World.

It is easy to name wrong ways to think about the recent upheavals. One conventional mistake is to become preoccupied with the undoubtedly fascinating melodrama of Gorbachev vs. Yeltsin. We don't know (and almost certainly *they* don't know) where these remarkable men are headed—and at key moments they have both proven to be adept riders of political currents. A second error is to presume that Russians, or Ukrainians, or Uzbek, are automatically "freedom loving"—as excessive a presumption as in the days when the fellow-traveling Left took them to be "peace loving." A third error is to think that the opposite of communist rule is, by definition, liberal democracy. Such two-toned thinking forgets that varieties of fascism are also options, especially in times and places where economies collapse. Visitors to Russia report that they do not meet many people who have an idea of what liberal, or social, democracy is. The related, fourth error is to think that leaders who have learned to impress Western bankers with exclamations about the glories of the global market are destined to turn the republics of the East into Holland. As Lawrence Wechsler has pointed out, such leaders are more likely to turn their countries into Mexico. A fifth is to think that anticommunist revolutions are preordained to be cleaner than the communist variety. Fortunately, nonviolence has largely been vindicated so far. But Romania, Yugoslavia, and Nagorno-Karabakh loom as terrible prefigurations. In calls for large-scale vengeance today, we hear one of the most dreadful extenuations of communist revolution recycled—the claim that you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. Thus is the suffering of millions of people rendered trivial, history once again envisioned as a temple of sacrifice, means once again excused in the name of ends.

Unfortunately, two-toned thinking is all the rage today in Eastern Europe and the erstwhile Soviet Union. It is as though some dreadful parody of revolutionary catechism has been called forth, the premise being that state action automatically amounts to terror and that something called the free market amounts to

deliverance. The result is a wild rhetoric of utopian capitalism—magnificent opera to the ears of Western bankers, but about as fantastical as the claim that the Soviet Bloc was day by day in every way approaching socialism. One day last spring, the ultra-capitalist Czech finance minister Václav Klaus gave a speech in England decrying the delusion that there was a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. Perestroika, he declared, was a fraud. The same day, his government was announcing plans to keep open the highly reputed arms factories of Slovakia—to preserve jobs and foreign exchange.

As the history of England and, indeed, most of the world, makes clear, marketization and modernization are likely to be brutal—whether they succeed or fail. Sacrifices will be imposed from above in the name of a phantasmagorical six-hundred-day privatization plan, as they were in the name of five-year forced industrialization plans. The miseries of unbridled capitalism are not the hallucinations of unreconstructed Marxists. Unemployment is exceedingly likely for much of the population. Women will be sent home. Homegrown fascists will find willing recruits looking for scapegoats. As the relics of Lenin are interred, relics of Hitler will be disinterred. In years to come, people will trash state regulation while expecting the state to keep prices down. Hundreds of thousands or millions of refugees will flee westward to receptions that will be, to say the least, unfriendly. Yet because decades of official rhetoric about the glories of socialism only succeeded in discrediting socialism, equality, and women's rights, language has come unhinged from reality. The result is what the Czech philosopher Ladislav Hejdanek has called "an unnatural situation"—the absence of a Left.

Over the next decade, one hopes that the ideas of a sensible Left—possibly under a different name—will reemerge: ideas of a mixed economy, of a constitutional multiparty system, of law and divided powers, of protection for unions, of more equality, of limits on the prerogatives of capital. Václav Havel's language of responsibility loses none of its timeliness now that the crumbling of Leninism leaves Eastern Europe without even a makeshift web of solidarity to resist balkanization. One must hope that the prospect for a difficult, impure social democracy is not exhausted—but it would be utopian to expect that a broken tradition can blithely pick itself up and, with an incantation of formulas, recover the initiative from the far more potent and cautionary history of the Party-State. A deeply depoliticized people does not invent democracy by speaking phrases.

One draws hope from the fact that, when the coup collapsed, the worst was averted. One also recalls that Sisyphus came from the eastern part of Europe. □

AMERICA AT CENTURY'S END
Edited by ALAN WOLFE
"The authors of this collection of firstrate essays cast a cold and critical eye on the present state of American society, and provide multiple clues to the origins and causes of our current predicaments."—Lewis Coser
A Centennial Book, $29.95 cloth, 594 pages

PALESTINE
A Photographic Journey
GEORGE BARAMKI AZAR
Introduction by Ann Mosely Lesch
An unforgettable photographic journal of the Arab world, this book is a rare opportunity to see facets of Palestinian life not portrayed in the popular media.
$24.95 paper, $49.95 cloth, 160 pages, color photographs

TRADITION IN A ROOTLESS WORLD
Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism
LYNN DAVIDMAN
"An exemplary text. [Davidman] deftly weaves the literature on religion, modernity, and gender with contemporary women's quests for religious meaning and family life."
—Laurel Richardson, author of *The New Other Woman*
$24.95 cloth, 265 pages

PALESTINE AND ISRAEL
The Uprising and Beyond
DAVID MCDOWALL
Now in paperback—"McDowall has established himself as the most authoritative guide to the maze of Israeli-Palestine politics. His timely and important book should be required reading for everyone concerned with this conflict and certainly in every Israeli household."—*The Observer*
$13.95 paper, 335 pages

At bookstores or order 1-800-822-6657. Visa/MasterCard.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY LOS ANGELES NEW YORK OXFORD

Two Cheers for Gorbachev

Reginald E. Zelnik

Even if Mr. Gorbachev is not the Joshua to lead his people into the promised land, he is the Moses who freed them from slavery.

—Leslie H. Gelb, *New York Times,* September 11, 1991.

[O]ur Founding Fathers were confronted with an adversary not even remotely comparable to the conspiracy in power that the Soviet state, under Lenin, Stalin—or Gorbachev—*has always been.*

—Martin Malia, *Los Angeles Times,* September 8, 1991 (emphasis mine).

As the dust begins to settle over Russia's August Days, and sober heads begin to take stock of their significance, we are assaulted from various sides by a rush to judgment, an interpretive positioning that strives to lend instant credibility to long-held ideological commitments. Some writers (in the *Nation,* for example) tortuously try to distance themselves from the pleasure most true democrats will feel about the failure of a right-wing coup and the appearance of the first real hope for a Russian democratic order in seven horror-ridden decades; others delight in celebrating August's events not for the opening they may give to popular sovereignty, but for the vindication they may lend to cold-war policies or to their own predictions of communism's inability to reform itself.

The meaning of the August Days will be sought and debated for years to come: the light they shed on modern Russian history, on the failure of the communist experiment, on the future of socialism, on the role of national identity in human affairs, and, of course, on such specific concerns as peace in the Middle East. While most of these questions are still very hard to answer, one important issue demands immediate attention: the role of Mr. Gorbachev. Ironically, with the exceptions of our president on the one hand and some liberal commentators such as Leslie Gelb on the other, it is striking to what extent one finds assessors of the August Days, radical and conservative alike, ready to heap scorn on that "failure" Gorbachev, or at best to write him off as, in the words of Martin Malia (professor emeritus of Russian history at UC Berkeley), a "pitiful anachronism."

My purpose here is to begin to redress the balance by placing in perspective Gorbachev's contribution to what I would describe as the most peaceful, democratic outcome one could possibly have anticipated to a drama that was fraught with the most terrible dangers, including that of a Yugoslav-type bloodletting writ large. Gorbachev's actions have not always been exemplary, and some—especially the naming of Yanayev, Pavlov, and other conservatives to key positions—have been just plain wrong. But as a human being facing superhuman odds, he has acquitted himself well and earned the cheers, at least two, of all who cherish democratic values. The issue is not, as some would have it, whether totalitarian communism could transform itself into democratic communism (virtually an oxymoron anyway, if one views communism in power as, by definition, a one-party system). The issue is, rather, whether or not this *particular* regime could act in such a way as to maximize the chances of a peaceful and democratic transition to an open, multiparty, nonrepressive polity. To the extent that this transition has occurred, it has falsified the old predictions that the regime could not prepare for its own dissolution without courting an all-out cataclysm, and our Cassandras are now left with little more to show than the banal prognosis that the Soviet system could not have lasted forever. It is very important to grasp this point if the larger meaning of August's events is to be examined soberly.

Malia's essays—*Comprendre la Révolution Russe* (1980), "To the Stalin Mausoleum" (*Daedalus,* 1990), and recent pieces in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Review of Books*—are the most sophisticated attempts we have to deny the possibility of serious internal reform and, in his most recent article ("August Revolution," *New York Review of Books,* September 26,

Reginald E. Zelnik is professor of history at UC Berkeley. His special area of interest is the history of the Russian labor movement.

1991), to belittle Gorbachev's historical role in the reform process. "August Revolution" is a highly interpretive narrative account, full of information that is valuable, to be sure, but that could also be pieced together to construct a very different chronicle of these events, and especially of Gorbachev's role.

Malia's view of Gorbachev is reminiscent of Boris Yeltsin's humiliating treatment of Gorbachev on the podium of the Russian Parliament (treatment Malia calls magnanimous). Yeltsin, however, may have had his tactical motives, and in any case has since softened his tone. Malia's attitude reminds us as well of the contemptuous manner adopted by Elena Bonner toward Gorbachev, the man who freed her husband, Andrei Sakharov, from exile and house arrest (for which Bonner was justly criticized by the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko). It is surprising to find that, in a long essay that reaches back to 1917, 1905, and ever the 1860s for points of reference, Malia says almost nothing positive about Gorbachev's accomplishments in the five years before the fall of 1990, when Gorbachev "veered" to the right (temporarily as it turned out). Malia never explicitly concedes that Gorbachev's efforts, though by no means single-handed, helped pave the way for the peaceful transition we have been witnessing. Significantly, Malia's single reference to Russia's having been "awakened and educated" by the years of perestroika omits Gorbachev's name altogether.

To acknowledge Gorbachev's accomplishments, it is not even necessary to have a firm opinion about his original vision, which was undoubtedly ambivalent, and surely more conservative—"cautious" may be more apposite—than the present outcome might suggest. But by the same token, there is little evidence that Yakovlev, Popov, Sobchak, Shevardnadze, or any of the other admirable actors in the democratic drama—including Yeltsin himself—envisioned such an outcome early on. Here we are speaking not of dissidents but of high-ranking Party members (in Yeltsin's case, a true Party "boss"), whose common characteristics were a vague understanding that drastic change was necessary, and a clearer understanding that for *peaceful* change to come about it must begin with "constitutional" initiatives "from above," that is, from reform-minded Party leaders. This is why Yeltsin and the others lent their strong support to Gorbachev's glasnost policies for an extended period, breaking with him at different points in time, depending on their individual assessments of when that time was right. The story of Russia's recent transformation could be written simplistically, with a single "truth," the need to make a quick and total break with the Soviet past, revealing itself to each player at a different moment—Yeltsin earlier, Shevardnadze later, Yakovlev later still, and Gorbachev, in a sense, breaking with himself last of all. But the story might better be written as a tale about men who grasped the more banal but nonetheless serious fact that peaceful transformation of so giant an empire and so tightly woven a system as the USSR was impossible without first preparing the ground for change, and that those best equipped to initiate the process and carry it through were men who were dwelling deep within the belly of the beast.



Coup casualty: KGB founder Felix Dzerzhinsky does a granite belly flop into the ash heap of history.

Here are just a few of Gorbachev's moves that helped prepare the ground for such a break. Internal measures: encouraging public discussion of painful truths about the past; tolerating open challenges to established authority; introducing partly free, competitive elections, which resulted in genuine non-Communists coming to office (something hitherto unknown in the Soviet Union); liberating and (what was even more astonishing) publicly celebrating outspoken democrats like Sakharov; publicly delegitimizing the Party's monopoly on truth and the unique significance of Marxism (for a taste, read Gorbachev's July 1991 speech to the Central Committee Plenum); introducing the first free press the country had known since 1917; taking real if hesitant steps toward sovereignty for the Baltic republics; expanding Jewish emigration rights. And some no less dramatic external changes: withdrawal from the bloody war in Afghanistan; major, almost extravagant disarmament concessions, which would signal the approaching end of the cold war; unprecedented cooperation with the West in dealing with potentially explosive international and civil conflicts; peaceful withdrawal from the East European countries of the Warsaw Pact, which in most cases has led to some hope of a transition to democracy. Ten

years ago, many experts—Malia among them—saw such moves as absolutely unthinkable and, lest we forget, predicted imperial foreign military adventures as the Soviet system's certain reaction to its internal paralysis.

The point is not, of course, that these changes came about because of one man, or that they were motivated by pure altruism rather than vast circumstantial pressures, or that they were all planned out in advance, or that they proceeded evenly, in a linear and pleasantly democratic fashion. Major historical change never happens that way, and least of all in what was for decades a "totalitarian" polity, where the powers arrayed against change were enormous and, in the views of many, insurmountable. Here one cannot help be surprised at Malia's insistence, completely correct but inconsistent with his disparagement of Gorbachev, that such dramatic political change without the prior shock of "large-scale military defeat" is historically unique. What other entrenched regimes have gone so far in altering their own characters in peacetime? The Crimean War was a necessary condition to the end of Russian serfdom in 1861, the Russo-Japanese War to Russia's first (very restricted) parliament in 1906. Horrendous bloodshed preceded the abolition of American slavery. The point is that something unprecedented and unpredictable took place in the USSR under Gorbachev, and well *before* the August Revolution (and it was a revolution), that made so gentle a transition possible. "Civil society" not only grew; its growth was nurtured. People were encouraged, sometimes directly, sometimes inadvertently, sometimes even grudgingly, to be less afraid, to take risks, to put their bodies on the line, to learn new skills, to speak plainly. They were encouraged to acquire computers and fax machines (formerly a state monopoly), to travel abroad (formerly a narrow privilege), to befriend foreigners (formerly a personal risk), to engage in strikes (formerly a crime against the state)—all without fear of draconian reprisals. In short, they were encouraged to be prepared for the day of reckoning. And they were.

Gorbachev promoted all this, however ambivalently. One of his goals, to be sure, was to keep the changes under control, and he managed this for five important years. His weakness, we can say with the benefit of hindsight, was his failure to recognize in time the moment when it was finally necessary to relinquish control, though even here it is hard to define the perfect moment. It was essential to the August outcome that the crack assault-squad and other units refused to respond to the commands of the junta. Who is to say those units would have behaved the same way two years, or even two months, earlier? A right-wing coup before the June elections that put Yeltsin in office, a real possibility if Gorbachev had moved precipitously to the left, would have left Yeltsin without the legitimacy of popular election. What if a coup had taken place before society began to feel its oats, to cast off the burden of seven decades of life without politics? And finally, what about a "coup" that actually enjoyed Gorbachev's support? It is by no means clear that an assault on the Yeltsin "White House" in which elite units were acting with President Gorbachev's blessing would have failed; in *that* scenario the soldiers' risky refusal to fire would not have been so easily rationalized as an act in defense of the "constitutional" regime that Malia calls a "fig leaf." Perhaps no part of Malia's article is less generous than his explanation for Gorbachev's refusal to bow to the will of the putschists: "He did so, no doubt, because the embrace of the right was becoming uncomfortably tight." This truly is metaphor without content. Just why was the embrace so uncomfortable? Why not welcome it, and use it as the occasion to destroy the much more uncomfortable grasp of the Left? Because "Yeltsin and the liberals were now the stronger party"? This is circular. Given the weak response to Yeltsin's calls for a general strike, the rather small number of citizens, according to most reports, who actually defended the White House, and the precarious moment of military disobedience and failed nerve on which the outcome teetered—what would the relative strength of forces have been if Gorbachev himself had led the coup? We may all count our blessings that, thanks to this "pitiful anachronism," such a possibility was never put to the test.

Perhaps *we* can afford to be snide about pseudo-constitutional forms, but Yeltsin, who is nobody's fool, cannot. His own conclusion that it was wise to cooperate with Gorbachev, or to maintain the niceties of two-thirds majorities in a supposedly meaningless Congress of Soviets, amounts to tacit recognition of the importance of not drawing lines too sharply too soon, of maintaining links between the democratic Left and the reform-minded center. Though a major breakthrough has taken place, we are still in a dangerous transition period.

The tests that lie ahead for Russia are enormous, and broad coalitions are still more useful than brusque political splits. The two greatest challenges, as before the coup, are the economy and nationalist strife. Notwithstanding Malia's suggestion that radical economic change, meaning widespread privatization, has already begun, the real economic transformation is not yet under way. Whatever it turns out to be, it will surely not be a successful transfer to a market economy in five

(Continued on p. 88)

Talking About Torture in Israel

Stanley Cohen

In *The Body in Pain,* her dense meditation on the vulnerability of the human body, Elaine Scarry keeps returning to the political consequences of the "rigidity" of pain, its sheer inexpressibility. "Physical pain does not simply resist language," she writes, "but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned."

There are many situations in which the experience of pain has to be rendered into words: patients talking to doctors, artists depicting suffering, human-rights organizations reporting on torture, injured parties claiming legal damages. Of all these contexts, torture is perhaps the most problematic, and the consequences of even using this word are the most profound. Torture is the calculated infliction of pain, but it is also an emblem of state power. To talk about torture is not just to talk about pain, but to enter a complex discourse of morality, legality and politics. As Scarry notes, the very structure by which pain is produced within the body of the prisoner entails denial, "a perceptual shift which converts the vision of suffering into the wholly illusory but, to the torturers and the regime they represent, wholly convincing spectacle of power." All talk about torture becomes a contest between different observers—the victim, the state, human-rights organizations—over how to reproduce this vision. Indeed, even to attempt any reproduction can be a way of subverting the spectacle of power.

The event itself should be simple enough to describe. For all the different contexts (religious inquisition, nationalist conflict, political thought control), for all the different techniques (crude blows, burning rods, psychotropic drugs), the primal scene is simple, and sickeningly identical from case to case. There is a room in which one or more persons (the "interrogators") deliberately inflict pain on another (the detainee, suspect, enemy of the state). But the technical problems inherent in representing this scene—how the experience is memorized, conveyed to others, corroborated, translated into a public language—are only compounded by its political context. There is always a struggle to define reality, an epistemological politics. On the one side, there are the forces to whom torture is real, to be denounced, to be abolished: the victim, international prohibitions and laws, human-rights organizations. On the other, there is the organized power of the state, denying that "it" happens, calling it something else, or justifying it as necessary, or even as something that serves a higher moral good. A history of torture is a history of talking about torture.

In the higher reaches of postmodernist theory (which, in this case, serves the interests of the powerful very nicely), no common, universal definition of torture is possible. It all depends. It depends, postmodernists tell us, on context, on the observer's values, on the truth-rules of the prevailing discourse. It depends, the powerful tell us, on context, on the interests of the state, on how you interpret those universal definitions. But in the struggle for social justice and human rights—however tarnished we are told these master-narratives are—some pragmatic, commonsense definition of the word must be attempted. The historian Edward Peters is surely right to say that if we reject the purely moralistic or sentimental uses of the term, then "the longest and surest definition is a legal—or at least a public—one." The common historical thread, "torment inflicted by a public authority ostensibly for public purposes," is captured in the standard 1975 United Nations Declaration Against Torture definition:

> Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by or at the instigation of a public official on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he has committed or intimidating him or other persons.

But what is meant by "severe"? What is meant by excluding (as the UN definition goes on to do) pain and

---

Stanley Cohen is professor of criminology at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. His recent books include Visions of Social Control *(Basil Blackwell, 1985) and* Against Criminology *(Transaction, 1989). He was a founder of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel.*

suffering "inherent in . . . lawful sanctions"? Is the mere threat of inflicting pain to be included? What does it mean to declare oneself to be "against" torture? How can information or confession be obtained from unwilling persons if not by causing them some suffering? There is a massive discourse—human-rights reports, judicial rulings, government commissions, philosophical tracts—that depends on the continued salience of these questions. And if there ever was a call for a shared public language, this is the place for it. However indeterminate the boundaries—between moderate and severe pain, between permissible and impermissible sanctions—the notion of boundaries assumes that there is an area that can be talked about.

Talk as Exposure

Talking about torture is difficult enough in general; it is even more so in Israel. In the depressing global league of torture drawn up by organizations like Amnesty International, Israel ranks far below Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and dozens of other countries all over the world. The methods of torture used in Israel are less elaborate, less systematic, and less intense than those favored by more brutal authoritarian regimes. But there are deep-seated ideological barriers to talking openly about the cases that do exist. Within the tiny (and diminishing) liberal enclaves of Israeli society, there is the self-serving myth that "things like this can't happen here"—and if they do, they are isolated abuses that will be dealt with properly. The ideological Right, as we shall see, perceives any attempt to expose gross human-rights violations as anti-Israel propaganda. The rest of the society—the majority of which has no moral unease about what happens to Palestinians and will justify anything in the name of national security—pays no attention to any such talk.

Just what is the record? In the first decade after the Occupation began in 1967, some allegations surfaced about the ill-treatment of Palestinian political detainees. These stories circulated mainly among political activists and a few lawyers, and were not given wider exposure or deeper credibility. In 1977, a number of well-grounded claims were published in the *London Sunday Times*. In the late 1970s, immediately after the first Begin government, torture clearly declined—apparently because of restraints ordered personally by the prime minister, to whom the General Security Service (Shin Bet or Shabak) is formally accountable.

By the mid-1980s, though, new reports were surfacing. From that period on, Israel has possessed the basic requirements for making the question of torture an official public problem: first, the objective record of events; and second, the subjective awareness on the part of a growing human-rights community and an increasingly brave Israeli media that there is something to be talked about. By 1990, even the U.S. State Department review of human rights in the Occupied Territories could record that "physical and psychological pressures are particularly severe during incommunicado detention in investigation." Note, though, the inhibition about using the taboo word "torture" in writing about Israel (an inhibition that even Amnesty International overcame only in its 1990 report). The political causes of this inhibition are obvious. In very few other country-entries does the State Department identify the sources of claims merely as "critics" and make no attempt to evaluate them.

The crucial year for the construction of torture as a public problem was 1987. One dramatic case triggered the discussion. Izzat Nafsu, an Israeli Circassian army officer, had been sentenced in 1982 to an eighteen-year prison term for espionage and treason. He continued to claim that he was innocent and that his confession had been extracted by force during a Shin Bet interrogation. In May 1987, the High Court accepted his claim, along with the corollary charge that the investigators had lied to the court, and ordered his release. A government commission, chaired by former Supreme Court president Justice Moshe Landau, was set up in June and issued its report four months later.

This is not "really" torture; there is no permanent damage; what is a couple of days without sleep, or being spat at, or being tied up and beaten compared with what happens "elsewhere"?

It is impossible to talk about torture in Israel without referring to the Landau Commission report. Indeed, this text is so rich and resonant that even a superficial reading reveals every major contradiction of Israeli society. The report arrived at three main formal conclusions. First, it concluded that since 1971, Shin Bet agents had systematically lied to the courts by denying that they had used force to extract confessions. Second, it ruled that the officials responsible for these sixteen years of torture and perjury should be exempt from any prosecution, on the grounds that they were "ideological

criminals" doing their sacred national duty, and that too many criminal cases would disrupt the agency's normal work. Finally, the commission decided that although perjury was to be utterly condemned, the actual methods of interrogation used in the past were "largely to be defended, both morally and legally." According to the Landau report, not only are methods of "nonviolent psychological pressure" justified to extract information, but "when these do not attain their purpose, the exertion of a moderate amount of physical pressure cannot be avoided." A secret second part of the report lays out the precise "operational guidelines" for permissible "moderate physical pressure."

This is not the place to consider the legal and moral reasoning by which the commission arrived at these extraordinary conclusions, nor to review the deluge of criticism that they have aroused. This has already been done in a special issue of the *Israel Law Review* and in the report on torture in the Occupied Territories published recently by B'tselem (the Israel Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; see "The Wrong Arm of the Law," *Tikkun,* September/October 1991). The main lines of criticism cover the spurious adaptation from criminal law of the "necessity defense" to authorize in advance the use of force by government officials; the lack of distinction between preventing possible future harm and testifying about supposed past offenses; and the elastic and wholly political definition of the enemies of the state against whom "special means" are permissible (the commission's definition of "hostile terrorist activity" or "subversion," which could include flying a PLO flag). For the purposes of this discussion, however, we need to focus on the clear prospect that the advance licensing of physical pressure—that is, lifting the absolute moral and legal taboo on the sanctity of the body—will open the door to the routine resort to other, graver abuses. This was indeed the peril that the Landau Commission professed itself so eager to avoid: "the danger of sliding toward methods practiced in regimes that we abhor."

Throughout the report, the commission avoids the word "torture" except in references to international conventions and methods used by the British in Northern Ireland. The less vivid and emotive phrase "moderate physical pressure" (or a set of similarly euphemistic equivalents) has to be used as long as Israel continues to hold on to a democratic self-image. In order to circumvent international prohibitions and the provisions against torture in Israeli law, the commission had to work within, rather than outside, the discourse of legal liberalism. We could see this not as a deliberate attempt to deceive, but as either self-deception or deception of the commission by the Shin Bet. In any event, whatever the Landau Commission's intentions (and let us read them as benevolent: to avoid excesses, to regulate, to place limits and restrictions, indeed *not* to allow torture), what follows from its recommendations is the institutionalization of abuse. The Shin Bet received the stamp of kashrut it requested. This is hardly surprising, given the commission's definition of its "principal function": to "guide the essential process of rehabilitation and healing" of the GSS, thus restoring to its agents "inner conviction in the rightness of their way which they require for their work."

The Israeli legal community, not usually given to public moral indignation, received the report with dismay. Mordechai Kremnitzer, dean of the Hebrew University Law School, summed up this reaction at the end of a sixty-two-page legal critique published in the *Israel Law Review*:

> It is difficult to live with the Landau report. One is tempted to shake oneself free of it, to awaken as if from a bad dream and say: perhaps it never was, perhaps the confidential part of the report does not contain a license for physical pressure in interrogation.

The shock that torture can indeed be justified in apparently democratic language is, as Kremnitzer is aware, not unique to Israel. Totalitarian states, military dictatorships—"regimes that we abhor," in Landau's words—don't have to talk about torture in any complicated way. They do it, deny it, and need not lay down any limits. George Orwell anticipated the awful truth fifty years ago, when he predicted that our century would be the time when practices like torture "which had long been abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years ... not only became common again, but were tolerated and even defended by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive."

The emblematic case was France during the Algerian War. As Rita Maran shows in her recent book *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (Praeger, 1989), France's colonial government defended the use of brutal, systematic torture—much worse than anything practiced in Israel—as part of its historical mission to maintain the French presence, to uplift and civilize native Algerians. France's 1955 Wuillaume Report (an investigation into allegations about torture in Algeria) could have been copied by the Landau Commission: Yes, torture ("excesses," "violence") had been used in Algeria; no, responsibility should not be fixed on individuals; in the future, "less brutal methods" or "special procedures" should be used under careful supervision; and it is important to "restore confidence in the police." Maran stresses the importance of democratic discourse in the Wuillaume Report:

> A state that acknowledged itself or any of its agents as torturers would stand discredited before its citizenry and the world. And so its agents spoke not of "torture" but of "abuses" and when arguing either for or against torture, did so in the lexicon of colonialism's civilizing mission.

Some two months after the Landau Commission issued its report, the intifada began, creating a political context that, of course, the commission could not have anticipated. Initial waves of mass arrests were followed by batch trials, which convicted prisoners on the basis of "evidence" no more substantial than the testimony of the soldiers who had arrested them. Court cases became (and remain) cruel parodies of judicial norms. At least twenty-five thousand Palestinians were arrested during each of the first three years of the intifada. Either the army or the Shin Bet has subjected at least eight thousand of these detainees to some form of formal interrogation, and at least a quarter of these eight thousand to what professional jargon euphemistically refers to as "intensive methods."

The untalkable has to be talked about because in all societies at all times (and Israel is no exception), and for the vast majority of the population, the contours of daily life depend on ignorance, silence, and passive collusion.

Repeated allegations circulated about gross ill-treatment of Palestinians during detention and interrogation: severe beatings, various forms of verbal and physical humiliation, being tied up in painful positions, long confinement in "closets," "coffins," or "refrigerators." In 1988 and 1989, eighteen Palestinians died during detention; in five of these cases, death apparently resulted from interrogation methods. In December 1989, Khaled al-Sheikh Ali was beaten to death by his interrogators in Gaza Central Prison. (His family's attorney was informed that Ali died of a heart attack.) Two Shin Bet agents were eventually sentenced to six months' imprisonment for causing death by negligence.

Against this background, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel was established at the beginning of 1990; it continues to work on publicity and education and take up individual complaints. In the summer of 1990, B'tselem also decided to investigate the subject. Research director Dr. Daphna Golan and I began to investigate methods of interrogation used against Palestinian political detainees since the beginning of the intifada. We worked for six months; in March 1991, B'tselem published our report, entitled "The Interrogation of Palestinians During the Intifada: Ill-Treatment, 'Moderate Physical Pressure,' or Torture?"

In talking about torture, we immediately faced intertwined technical and political problems. Torture is a unique form of human-rights violation in two respects. First, the international prohibition is absolute. No contingencies can be invoked to justify the use of torture: neither superior orders nor exceptional circumstances, such as war or a perceived threat to national security. This absolute ban creates strong requirements of proof. Allegations cannot be thrown around carelessly. Torture is too potent, too special a word to be debased by rhetorical use. But this leads to the second problem: Indisputable proof is difficult to obtain. Torture represents the public—in the sense that it is perpetrated by the state, which claims to protect the public—but it does not occur in public, as it did in the spectacle of torture that prevailed in the premodern era. Modern torture is invisible. There is the victim and the interrogator in that closed room. The victim very rarely makes a formal complaint and if he does, he is seldom believed. The interrogator remains silent and unaccountable—except in those rare cases when the regime gives way to a more democratic successor.

As a result, great care has to be taken in checking stories. The moment the word "torture" is used, rather than pressure, force, ill-treatment, abuse, even violence, the talk takes on a dimension absent in standard human-rights documentation. Other human-rights abuses at least can be submitted to common criteria of observable fact: house demolitions, shootings, teargassing, deportation, land confiscation, administrative detention. In each case, the event can be documented as a matter of public record and its semantics are not disputed. A house is blown up—and the issue is not whether this happened, but whether this is justified or not. In the case of torture, however, the value position is preceded by first-order questions: Is this happening? Can it be happening here? Is torture the proper word to use?

These questions appeared even before the report was published. The B'tselem board (lawyers, law professors, politicians, human-rights experts) read various drafts of the report more intensely than any of the organization's previous reports and scrutinized its language, sources, and methodology. By all standards of the genre, the B'tselem report is a conventional human-rights document: We review international definitions

and prohibitions, Israeli law, the status of the GSS, the Landau report, and previous allegations. We then describe each of the eleven methods of interrogation reported by our forty-one interviewees; this is followed by longer stories from seven individual detainees. Some common methods of torture are illustrated with drawings—like the "banana tie," in which the suspect's legs are bound to the front and his hands to the back legs of a stool, the body bent over like a banana, to be beaten. These drawings were our main departure from the normal genre. We wanted to undermine the function of political language ("moderate physical pressure") that Orwell pointed to: "Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them."

But even the drawings, even the vivid testimonies of deliberate abuse, humiliation, and violence over periods as long as forty-five days, even the medical documentation on six detainees injured so badly by their interrogators that they needed hospital treatment—all this knowledge enters a discourse in which nothing can be taken for granted.

Here is Mohammed Jit, in the Shati Detention Camp in Gaza: "They put a sack over my head, choked me with their hands around my throat, let go, put my head in a pail of water up to my neck. The sack was stuck to my face. They did this six or seven times.... When they took my head out of the pail of water, they beat my head with their fists." Here is "Hassan," with the interrogator known as "Maradona" in Dahariya Detention Center: "He began to hit me on the head with the pole [a bolt about twenty centimeters long with a rubber handle]. He hit me twice and I fell down. When I came to, they were still beating and kicking me. I tried to get up and got more beatings on the head. I fell down. While I was lying down they continued to beat me all over my body.... I thought that I was going to die then and there—I couldn't move. Two stood over me and began to spit all over me, again and again without stopping. They stepped on my face with their shoes." And here is "Barakat," in the Russian compound off Jaffa Road, which every tourist in Jerusalem passes: "Someone held a pipe of Tippex [correction fluid]. Another grabbed me by the hair and poured Tippex into my mouth. I immediately spat up everything and his face was covered all over with spit and Tippex.... Then they really got mad and beat me harder. They continued beating me and because of all the beating I lost control and began urinating in my clothes and I noticed that my urine was full of blood. I saw blood on my pants and blood and urine on the floor. They wiped up the blood with my beard and hair."

Ill-treatment, "moderate physical pressure," or torture? Our subtitle recognized the liguistic ambiguities that attended these descriptions.

Talk as Self-Correction

Of the many contradictions in Israeli society, one of the strangest for the outsider to understand is that the same political space is shared by brutal repression and democratic institutions. As much as the denial of Palestinian rights is total, as much as racism and militarism penetrate civil society, so—for Israeli Jews, that is—the terrain of democracy, legality, and civil rights remains more or less open.

This means that the work needed to expose human-rights violations can be done in relative freedom and that there are open arenas for talking about this work, such as the media, universities, and political meetings. Human-rights organizations—Israeli, international, and to a lesser extent, Palestinian—can do the sort of documentation impossible in societies where gross human-rights violations take place under a regime of total state control with no access or accountability. In Israel, the formal mechanisms of liberal legality are intact, if vulnerable. There are special sections in the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Justice that painstakingly handle complaints from bodies such as Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross. There are officials whose entire working lives are spent meeting with endless delegations from all over the world. And the press is restrained more by its own sense of the national consensus than by direct state censorship.

None of this freedom, of course, is enjoyed by the Palestinians—and this, in itself, corrupts and compromises the heart of Israeli democracy. It also means that these officials are engaged in ritual denials, accusations of worldwide bias against Israel, uncheckable promises to "investigate each allegation," or appeals to preposterous legalistic sophistry to explain why, for example, the Geneva Convention does not apply to the Occupied Territories. It means that allegations coming from Palestinian, or international, or suspect Israeli sources are easily discredited—while exactly the same information from a mainstream Israeli organization like B'tselem has to be taken seriously. Despite all these limitations, though, the freedom to talk is real and should not be taken for granted.

The consequence of this freedom is to create the impression of a self-correcting social system. The image is of a society where departures from democratic norms are exposed, recognized only *as* departures, and then automatically corrected by built-in mechanisms of restraint and regulation. There are reports, complaints,

investigations of allegations, commissions of inquiry, routine procedures, questions in the Knesset, an independent state-comptroller office, and prosecutions of individual officials who go too far. During the first two weeks after the B'tselem report was published, we saw extensive reaction from the liberal bloc of Israeli society. The Hebrew papers—particularly *Ha'aretz* and the influential mass-circulation weeklies—gave detailed coverage to our report; they printed extracts of testimonies, descriptions of interrogations, and the drawings (which made a special impact). Editorials and articles carried demands for an inquiry into the allegations. Sixteen Knesset members—all from RATZ, MAPAM, Shinui, and Labor—appealed to the prime minister either to deny or confirm the conclusions of the report.

This coverage was generally sympathetic and fair. The impression was that people were genuinely perturbed. This, remember, was the period after the Gulf War, when there was hardly any sympathy for the Palestinians even among liberals. But the question "Can this be happening here?" drew forth the liberal anxiety about how these patterns of violence might spread to Israeli society itself. Even a right-wing journalist, Dov Goldstein, joined the front and demanded: "Is it or is it not true that the Shabak, or the police, or the army ... is breaking the arms of Palestinian prisoners by torture ... as happens in South America, Africa, and Asia?"

How did the official system respond? At first, there were standard techniques of official-talk: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) criticized B'tselem for releasing the report without prior notice; the Ministry of Justice claimed (falsely) that it had not been sent allegations to check; assurances were given that individual complaints were always followed up. But clearly the subject was not going to be buried. Two powerful Knesset committees (Foreign Affairs–Defense and State Comptroller) demanded and planned debates. A vivid testimony by Ari Shavit, an Israeli reservist who had served in Ansar 2 (the army detention facility at Gaza Beach), was published in *Ha'aretz* (an English translation later appeared in the *New York Review of Books*). The sounds of pain that Shavit recorded—the "hair-raising human screams" from the interrogation block—could not be easily shut out.

A week later, no fewer than three separate official inquiries were announced: one by the IDF (to cover allegations about ill-treatment in army prisons), one within the GSS itself, and another coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. As I write, we are still waiting for the results of these investigations. A press release in August that reproduced part of the IDF report suggested that the report's authors at least took our allegations seriously: They recommended that some interrogators be prosecuted but also (curiously) that all interrogations be transferred from the army to the Shabak. The other investigations are totally secret. Overall, there is likely to be some discrediting of our evidence and criticism of our refusal to identify informants whose anonymity we guaranteed. Our careful reservations about not being able to vouch for every detail might backfire. And the limitation of all such official inquiries is that they remain within a legal model of checking individual testimonies, rather than looking for general patterns.

To what extent can the system correct itself through such mechanisms? Clearly there are major limits to what the "watchdog" mode of human-rights work can achieve when it is running against the dominant political current. In fact, the conditions that allow ill-treatment and torture are endemic rather than incidental. These conditions are, first of all, political: a perceived threat to national security; the need to process large numbers of suspects; dehumanization of the out-group; high-level authorization (provided formally by the Landau Commission) to violate normal moral principles; the invocation of a sacred mission to justify anything. Second, there is a set of legal conditions: a prolonged period of incommunicado detention without access to a lawyer (two weeks is the norm, a month common, three months possible); the fact that detainees cannot identify their interrogators by name or number; trials under military regulations rather than in regular courts; the absence of independent medical examinations; procedural rules that do not automatically exclude evidence obtained by force.

The political will needed to eradicate such conditions does not exist in Israel today. I don't want to sound too cynical about self-correction. The traditional rationales for human-rights intervention remain valid: humanitarian help for individuals; the possibility of redress; the inhibiting effect produced by the knowledge that one is being watched; the chance to make violations more (and hopefully, unbearably) costly for the authorities. Even on general principles, the Israeli legal system still retains some flexibility. In June 1991, for example, attorney Avigdor Feldman (acting on behalf of the Public Committee Against Torture) won a notable case in the High Court by obtaining a restraining order calling on the government to justify the legality of the Landau recommendations. There have been limited victories on limited terrain; law can be a shield if not a sword.

A more depressing event, on wider political terrain, took place in April. At the annual Independence Day ceremony, Landau was awarded the prestigious Israel

Prize. The citation noted that, as president of the Supreme Court, Justice Landau had written decisions that translated "basic values of freedom, equality, and fairness into a way of life"; it extolled his role in advancing the "principles and values of an enlightened society ... and human rights." The citation was signed by the two leading Israeli liberal figures, former attorney general Yitzhak Zamir and Justice Aharon Barak. The citation made no reference to the Landau Commission—only to Landau's previous distinguished record. (A newspaper advertisement by the Public Committee drawing attention to this was denounced as "bad taste.")

Talk as Treachery

For the Right—who claim, quite correctly, to speak for the national consensus—there is nothing to correct. Indeed, in their view, the problem with Israeli society is that too many concessions are made to universal principles such as legality and civil liberties. This is just the Hellenism that Kahane used to denounce in every speech. To respond to internal and external criticism is to be too sensitive to a "foreign" ideology, to worry too much about what the goyim think. And for those on the Right who genuinely understand human-rights principles, the doctrine of national security overrides other considerations.

A graphic statement of this position came not from the Right but from a political journalist identified with the liberal center. In an article in *Ha'aretz,* Dan Margalit told his own atrocity story. His daughter and her friends were walking along a Jerusalem street. Some Palestinians in a Mercedes drove toward the girls and kept stopping near them; when they started getting out of the car, the girls ran and screamed for help from a soldier. The Palestinians drove away and the girls complained to the police. What was Margalit's message? "One of these young girls is my daughter and as far as I'm concerned, the Shabak can use as much 'moderate physical pressure' as the Landau Commission says in order to find the gang. I don't care what the B'tselem report will write about it." Yes, there must be some controls; yes, deviations must be punished; but a democracy cannot deal with its violent political enemies as it does with ordinary delinquents.

The range of explicitly right-wing opinion was revealed in a series of interviews published in *Ha'aretz.* Only three of the eleven right-wingers interviewed had read the report, but all tried to discredit information based on Palestinian sources and disseminated by an organization like B'tselem. More fundamentally, right-wing critics saw the whole enterprise of talking about human-rights violations as suspect. For Limor Livnat, member of the Likud Central Committee, even to read the report would mean being contaminated by the "moral obscenity" of its source. Those who talk about human rights are denounced as traitors, enemy agents, or self-hating Jews. In a letter I received from one "Blanche Tannenbaum, New York" after talking about the report on WBAI radio, the exact description of me was a "Jewish anti-Semitic piece of shit."

But the most extraordinary of all such terms of abuse is "informer" (the Hebrew word *malshin*). Can there be another country in the world where whistle-blowers—those who expose not just human-rights abuses but also fraud, corruption, and malpractice in government agencies—are routinely branded as "informers"? The dovish Knesset members who toured the United States in June to draw attention to the government's expansionist settlement plans were also denounced by Arik Sharon and the Right as a "commando of informers." According to this rhetoric, talk is treachery. ("Careless talk costs lives" was the wartime slogan in Britain.) An important subtext is "Don't let the goyim know." Even if the picture is true, it should not be allowed to circulate. A peculiarly Israeli theme, articulated clearly by former Chief Rabbi Goren, is that Jews (and particularly the "holy and pure" Jews who work for the GSS) are simply incapable of doing anything bad. Right-wingers and centrists have also questioned the accuracy of the allegations or assigned them the status of "exceptions," departures from the norm. These objections have to be responded to seriously by human-rights organizations anywhere, especially if they are presented in an open-minded way, rather than as a technique of denial.

All these statements, however, express a single, if internally contradictory, message: "It can't be happening here, but if it is, it must be all right." Let us call the two elements in this message denial and justification.

A common form of denial finds expression in self-protective homilies, such as "You can never believe what Palestinians say." An extreme racist version of this position appears in an interview reprinted in our report, in which two retired Shabak agents claim that Arabs have a "mental problem," a "genetic difference" that prevents them from telling the truth: "A Bedouin cannot pass a polygraph because his moral level is different from yours." A more sophisticated version says that because Palestinians are the enemy, they deliberately lie and exaggerate for the purpose of political propaganda. Critics have also discredited B'tselem as politically biased and gullible, or else downplayed the seriousness of the injuries: This is not "really" torture; there is no permanent damage; what is a couple of days without sleep, or being spat at, or being tied up and beaten compared

with what happens "elsewhere"? And after all, they don't really feel it; look at the violence they inflict on each other.

Justifications of torture draw first on the idea of "necessity," which appears in a sophisticated form in the Landau report. There is no other way, this argument goes; national security requires these methods. A second, more elevated version, appeals to a sacred mission, a higher set of values that transcend the rule of law. (As Livnat argues, "Zionism is above all. If a group like B'tselem had existed when Israel was being established, a Jewish state would not have come into being.") A third appeal—deeply ingrained in the collective Israeli psyche—is to the Darwinian struggle for survival: It's us or them; it's our fate to be locked into a cycle of violence that has no end. And finally, a fourth line of defense is to reproduce wholesale the self-image of the security services: good people doing their job as best they can under difficult conditions. Somebody has to do the dirty work; "you can't chop wood without splinters flying"; every palace has its dirty corners.

Many of these reactions were publicly expressed not by the far Right, but by no less than Justice Landau, the bastion of Israeli liberal legalism. In response to a private (but admittedly provocative) letter from the director of B'tselem asking if he saw any connection between the methods revealed by our inquiry and those permitted by the commission, Landau published an open letter in the mass-circulation daily paper *Yediot Achronot*. Understandably sensitive to what he saw as unfair criticism, Landau took two main lines of defense. The first was to repeat the commission's argument that international definitions of torture cover only methods that cause "severe" pain and suffering. These were not approved; "moderate physical pressure" is obviously something different, since it does not destroy the subject's dignity. The second was to requote the commission's conclusion that "false claims" and "wild exaggerations" are "part of the systematic campaign conducted by terrorist organizations against the GSS, with the aim of weakening it in its war against Hostile Terrorist Activity, and tarnishing its image in the eyes of well-wishing individuals and organizations by presenting it as a ruthless organization engaged in torture and maltreatment of innocent 'freedom fighters.'" He poured scorn on our methods of checking sources for internal consistency and validating them through external evidence such as medical reports.

Lest his political subtext remain unclear, Landau went on to accuse B'tselem of having caused prejudice and animosity toward the Shin Bet investigators, "as if the torture of people under interrogations was their daily bread. The B'tselem report viciously maligned a service whose function is to defend the residents of the state and the Territories (Jews and Arabs) against mass and individual terror. Ultimately you therefore assisted—unintentionally, I assume—those evil-mongers of the State who conduct psychological warfare against it, in addition to other kinds of warfare, with the purpose of undermining its existence."

The question of terrorism is, in fact, irrelevant: Not a single one of our forty-one subjects was charged with or even suspected of committing or planning an act of terrorism. But the real irrelevance of Landau's letter, as we noted in our reply (which *Yediot Achronot* refused to publish), is that nowhere does he decide between two possible alternatives: either that these practices (or something like them) occur—but they fall within the commission's secret approved guidelines—or else that such practices (or something like them) lie outside the approved guidelines, and therefore should be condemned as torture. Neither alternative, of course, can be publicly confirmed unless the secret guidelines are disclosed.

Talk as Discursive Practice

The public criticism we least expected came from our own side. In a series of articles in the weekly supplement to *Davar,* Adi Ophir, a philosopher from Tel Aviv University and a founder of the anti-Occupation group the Twenty-First Year, launched a sardonic attack on the B'tselem report. His thesis is complex and became qualified in response to counter-criticism, but its essence is clear enough to anyone immersed in current postmodernist theory and anti-positivist philosophy.

Ophir argues that radical intellectuals should know better than to work within the standard genre of human-rights documentation. The B'tselem report, for Ophir, is just another text—a text with a pretense to representation that it cannot sustain. Ophir sees any claim to objectivity—checking the facts ("I was tied up for twelve hours") or their representativeness ("Most detainees are tied up . . .")—as merely a "rhetorical strategy" designed to give the document legitimacy. Behind this strategy, he writes, lies a

> worldview, liberal and positivist, according to which facts exist on their own and one can really distinguish between facts and values, description and interpretation and, above all, one can disconnect a description of social reality from the power struggle that attempts to shape this reality. In a postmodern world, in a culture that rejects the

(Continued on p. 89)

ROUNDTABLE

Linkage: Loans, Aid, and Land for Peace

Tikkun: There has been considerable speculation that President Bush's call to postpone congressional debate on loan guarantees to Israel was the first of a series of possible economic measures the U.S. might use to pressure Israel into changing its settlement policies in the West Bank. Should there be linkage between monies going to Israel from the U.S. and progress in the peace process? Should aid, loan guarantees, or other economic measures be used to pressure Israel on this issue?

Representative Stephen Solarz: The U.S. has an interest in seeing peace established between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and hence it will have to play an active role in achieving this aim once negotiations begin. But I don't think it would be productive for the U.S. to seek to achieve this through the lever of our aid programs for Israel, or to seek to extract from Israel concessions that it is not willing to make on its own. If we thought it appropriate to use aid in this way, we would presumably then have to use the same mechanism in relationship to our sales of arms to extract concessions from the Arab states as well.

I don't think it would serve the long-term interests of peace in the region for the U.S. not only to drag the parties to the negotiating table but then to force down their throats a settlement that would otherwise be unacceptable to them. I don't think our political system would tolerate such an approach. I doubt if such an approach would succeed in extracting the concessions we deem necessary. And even if it did, I have the gravest doubts that it would constitute the basis for a *lasting* peace, which is ultimately what a peace process should be all about. If the Arabs come to the conclusion that the U.S. is going to do their work for them, and use the aid that the U.S. provides to Israel as a means to induce Israel to make concessions, then the Arabs will have much less of an incentive to make the concessions that they will have to make. Unless they are willing to make those concessions—recognition of Israel's right to exist, willingness to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, an end to the embargo, and agreement to establish the kind of security arrangements Israel will undoubtedly legitimately insist upon—there will be no possibility of peace in the first place. Ultimately, the key to peace lies not in American pressure on Israel, but in Arab concessions.

Michael Walzer: I agree with Steve Solarz that the U.S. must seek to bring Israel into direct negotiations with the Arab states, and not try to set up a double set of negotiations between Israel and the U.S., and the U.S. and the Arab states. But I don't think that one can rule out the use of American power to influence the decisions that both the Israelis and the Arabs make. In the case of Israel, I'd want to make the distinction between aid already committed in long-standing programs (the foreign aid package) and new forms of assistance.

I think it a misinterpretation to think that the dispute over loan guarantees was an effort on the part of the U.S. to bring pressure on Israel. This battle took place at Israel's initiative. One could more accurately read it as an effort by the Israeli government to secure a blank check—or a check so large as to be, in effect, a blank check—from the U.S. in support of Israel's current policies. The U.S. should not be underwriting policies that we believe ought to be negotiable at the peace conference.

Tikkun: What should happen in January, when the loan guarantees will be in front of the Congress again, if no progress on the issue of settlements has been made at the negotiations?

Walzer: That depends on what the Arab states have offered. If the Arab states have offered to lift the embargo in exchange for a settlement freeze, and if Israel then refuses that offer, I don't think vast sums of money should be appropriated to a government which, with that money, will almost certainly be reinforced in its refusal to make concessions.

Shulamith Aloni is a member of Knesset representing the Citizens' Rights party (RATZ). Naomi Chazan is a professor of political science at Hebrew University. David Saperstein is director of the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the Reform Movement in Judaism). Jerome Segal is president of the Jewish Peace Lobby. Stephen Solarz is a Democratic congressman from Brooklyn and a member of the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs. Yair Tzaban is a member of Knesset representing the MAPAM party. Michael Walzer is a member of the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton and coeditor of Dissent.

Naomi Chazan: I think we in Israel have to understand that the U.S. is not under any obligation to provide aid or support for Israel. This is a privilege granted to Israel, not a right. Now the U.S. has begun to respond negatively to Israeli policy and to question some of the support that Israel is requesting. It was the obligation of the Israeli government to recognize that this linkage would certainly be there—and to act accordingly.

MK Yair Tzaban: Six months ago I was a member of a Knesset delegation that visited the U.S. and met with people in Congress and the administration. At that point, we opposed any linkage between loan guarantees and Israeli settlement policy, even though we were urging our own government to stop the settlement policy. But at that point we never imagined that our government—Sharon, with the backing of Shamir—would be planning to escalate settlement in the Occupied Territories—a policy of outright provocation. When I raised this issue in the Knesset a few weeks ago, Sharon responded in an extremely provocative way by saying that despite all our objections, he was now planning nineteen-thousand new housing units in the Occupied Territories. So if today they asked the peace camp in the Knesset to form a "solidarity campaign" against Bush on loan-guarantee linkage, it would be very hard to agree. Our government created the linkage between the two issues.

All the world, and half of the Israeli population, support the proposition of exchanging land for peace. But all the world, headed by the U.S., keeps coming to Shamir and accepting his position that the only thing he will consider is an interim arrangement of limited autonomy (i.e., *no* exchange of land for peace) for the next five years. But how can anyone accept the idea that during five years of interim arrangement the Israeli government would continue to build new settlements? So inevitably, settlements will become a central issue for the peace process as soon as negotiations begin.

Jerome Segal: I strongly favor tying the loan guarantees to a settlement freeze. If Likud leaders continue to expand settlements they will succeed in making it impossible for any future government to engage in a land-for-peace exchange. I imagine that Bush will succeed in getting Israel to make an initial pledge to freeze settlements in the opening stages of the negotiations (possibly in exchange for a lifting of the Arab boycott). At that point the loan guarantees will probably sail through Congress without any conditions at all. Then the negotiations will deadlock or break down a month or two later, and with the money already pocketed, the Israeli government will go back to building settlements. So we need conditions set on the loan guarantees, whether or not there is an initial settlement freeze.

I don't think we can use the aid as a mechanism to get a specific outcome of the negotiation process. What we can do is to use it as a mechanism to prevent Likud from radically altering the status quo. But if we use aid to try to force a withdrawal from the West Bank, we are in essence saying that America is going to abandon Israel. If America says something of that sort, it will strengthen the Israeli Right, and Arab states might become more hard-line, thus making the prospect of agreement even further off.

Solarz: I profoundly disagree. The question of settlements must be addressed, but it's only one of many issues that have to be resolved: the future status of the West Bank and Gaza and the Golan and Jerusalem; what kind of security agreements have to be put in place; the scope of authority of the interim government in the West Bank—and on the other side, the ending of the Arab embargo, and the repeal of the UN's Zionism-is-racism resolution. There is a whole host of issues, any one of which would be sufficient to prevent an agreement from being reached. The objective of American diplomacy should not be simply to stop the settlements, but to achieve an agreement for what one hopes would be a lasting peace.

It makes no sense to single out the settlements from all the other issues and then to link them to the pressing humanitarian need to absorb Russian Jewish refugees. After all, if Israel is not willing to make the concessions necessary for peace, it makes no sense to focus just on the settlements issue. Israel could dig in its heels on any of a dozen issues that could lead to a failure of negotiations—leaving aside the issue of the reluctance of Arab states to make necessary concessions.

On the other hand, I think that the Israeli government needs to recognize that if settlement continues, it could jeopardize Israel's ability to get the guarantees if the President were to dig in his heels on this subject. But if we don't provide the guarantees, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews might not go to Israel, and then risk the possibility that at some future time they could not get out of the Soviet Union—so their security is in jeopardy. So this situation requires wisdom and statesmanship on all sides.

David Saperstein: I strongly believe that an expansionist settlement policy that seeks to change the status quo in such a way as to make impossible a future exchange of land for peace is exceedingly dangerous to Israel's security and Israel's democratic character. It is also absolutely devastating to Israel's support among

TIKKUN
TIKKUN
TIKKUN.... THE PERFECT GIFT FOR EVERYONE!
Lefcourt

Dear TIKKUN:

Please send out the following gift subscriptions:

▼

Gift No. 1 ❒ $22 for TIKKUN subscribers

❒ $25 if you haven't yet subscribed (or subscribe below with this envelope—and include a check or your credit card info—and get the subscriber rate)

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone No. _____

▼

Gift No. 2 ❒ $22 for TIKKUN subscribers ❒ $25 non-subscriber

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone No. _____

▼

Gift No. 3 ❒ $22 for TIKKUN subscribers ❒ $25 non-subscriber

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone No. _____

❖ ❖

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone No. _____

❒ $25/one year ❒ $48/two years

❒ Check enclosed ❒ Visa/Mastercard info enclosed

Visa/MC # _____ Exp. Date _____

❒ Please begin my own subscription to TIKKUN

Total Amount Enclosed: $_____

Payment must be made in U.S. funds drawn from a U.S. bank or with an international money order in U.S. funds. Add $12/year per sub for Canada and Mexico, $16 for all other countries. Israeli subscribers can give gifts by sending 65 shekel/year per sub to TIKKUN, P.O.B. 10528, Jerusalem, 91103. Make checks payable to TIKKUN. Offer valid through 12/31/91.

XTKN31

Give a Gift that Keeps on Coming

There's nothing quite as exciting as getting TIKKUN as a gift. As you (our readers) know, TIKKUN lifts the spirit and challenges the mind. Unconventional, provocative, deep, unpredictable . . . TIKKUN is at the center of so many debates and discussions, it's sure to please and stimulate anyone you send it to.

And each time it arrives during the next year, your gift recipient will appreciate again your thoughtfulness in sending TIKKUN. If you already subscribe, gift subscriptions are only $22 each ($8 off the newsstand price). If not, do it now and get the subscriber rate. Don't delay: the earlier you let us know what gifts you want to send, the quicker we can get out gift cards to your recipients. And prices go up in 1992.

To Order By Phone

In order to save time when ordering (you know how busy this time of year gets!), please have the following information ready:

1) Completed order form

2) Credit card number and expiration date

Then call our subscription house:

1-800-877-5231

To Order By Mail

Simply fill out the accompanying form, write us a check or give us your credit card info (it saves us the cost of billing you), and drop it in a mailbox. This may be the easiest gift your friends and families will ever love.

TEAR ALONG PERFORATION. FLAP IS GUMMED.
PLACE YOUR ORDER FORM INSIDE.
FOLD OVER GUMMED FLAP AND SEAL.

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 83 MT. MORRIS, IL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

TIKKUN
P.O. Box 332
Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7734

the American people and the American Congress, because *that* Israel is not the Israel in which the American people believe. And we must never lose sight of the fact that U.S. support for Israel is in the strongest interests of the U.S. and is indispensable for Israel's survival.

I oppose the linkage that Jerome Segal is arguing for on three grounds. First, U.S. support for Israel is fragile and ephemeral—it is extraordinarily broad but exceedingly thin and could easily be shattered. The impact of the President's statement shows that fragility. Once lost, U.S. support can never be fully recaptured, and this will have devastating consequences for Israel's future economic and military well-being. The American people don't like foreign aid. Linkage is a Pandora's box. Once Congress begins to go down the path of linkage, and constituents urge members of Congress to question the aid package to Israel, you are going to find a dramatic decrease in U.S. support.

Second, I'm not convinced linkage would be effective. Settlements have been built for ideological and internal political reasons—and not because of what aid was available from the U.S. If we didn't give the money or the guarantees in order to affect Israeli policy, it would have the opposite short-term effect—it would guarantee a sharp rise in settlement activity by Israeli leaders who wanted to stand up to the United States.

Third, it's particularly dangerous to link humanitarian aid to progress in the peace process. Israel's existence as a state depends on its ability to absorb Jews who need a place of refuge. If aid is not available to resettle these Jews, the resulting economic strains will cause social and economic upheaval divisive enough to breed insecurity that would make steps toward peace impossible, even if the Israeli government wanted to take such steps. Furthermore, the U.S. has never had a policy of linking humanitarian aid to political concerns. There are some precedents for the U.S. to link general military, and economic aid to political considerations, but we have a history of *not* tying humanitarian aid in this way. To link aid in this particular case would be to use a different standard for Israel from other cases of humanitarian aid.

Walzer: As to settlement activity being independent of U.S. aid, the fact is that there was a deep lull in settlement activity before the Russian aliya—but once that aliya began and money began to pour into the country, there was a corresponding increase in construction on the West Bank. Sharon has been given a green light and has been spending as if there were no limits.

Solarz: Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate's Appropriations Committee, has proposed that we not only prohibit the use of the guaranteed money on the Arab side of the Green Line, but that we also reduce the level of the guarantees by whatever amount of monies Israel uses in building new settlements. From your point of view, Michael Walzer, would that eliminate the linkage?

Walzer: It would go a long way, if you could get inside the Israeli budget.

Tzaban: Although I'm very concerned about the need to get adequate funds to provide for Soviet immigration, I think we should also be careful, when talking about "humanitarian concerns," to understand that avoiding another war with our Arab neighbors is "also" a legitimate humanitarian concern.

Now, as for the Leahy proposal, even we in the Israeli Knesset are unable to get accurate figures about the money being spent on the West Bank, given the way budget figures are manipulated and hidden. I do not believe that this information could be obtained in a way that would give any teeth to the Leahy proposal. At the same time, I don't think that the best way to affect Israeli public opinion is through negative acts. Positive acts have a much more plausible effect.

And please remember that a recent poll (conducted just before Bush requested a delay in consideration of the loans) indicated that 57 percent of the Israeli population supported the notion of freezing settlements on the West Bank if that were necessary to secure loan guarantees.

Solarz: To the extent that one believes that Israel should freeze settlements, one should insist that Israel get something of a comparably significant sort from the Arab states. And this is one of the reasons why I think Israel's settlement policy should be dealt with during the negotiations process.

MK Shulamith Aloni: There's something I don't understand in your thinking in the U.S. To me it seems clear that the first responsibility for solving the problems of Russian immigrants should lie with the Israeli government, not with the government of the U.S. Why are we putting the humanitarian obligations on the U.S. government before the Israeli government uses its resources? If the Israeli government can put two billion dollars into the West Bank for political reasons, why shouldn't it be pressured to use that money instead to help its own new Jewish immigrants? I don't understand why American Jewry covers up this obvious point.

Second, American Jewry lives under a constitution, believes in human rights, believes in equality before the law. Why doesn't it insist that the Israeli government

hold these same principles in relationship to the Palestinians? Why do American Jews ignore what the Israeli government is doing in violation of human rights in the Occupied Territories? Something is very mixed up here. You talk about humanitarian help to the Israelis but give the government money which it then uses to do things that are very anti-humanitarian.

Solarz: The U.S. government should express its concerns about these matters, though obviously we face a very complicated issue in separating provocations from responses. But ultimately we have to make it clear that the issue of human-rights violations, settlements, etc., must be settled primarily by the people in the government of Israel itself in the context of negotiations with the Arab countries.

Aloni: But your aid and loan guarantees help the Israeli government continue with the settlements and continue with the policy. You in the Congress are interfering with our internal affairs. We are split here—half of the people feel that there should be territorial compromises and half don't, but by sending aid to the Israeli government you help influence events.

Solarz: The United States is not an imperial power and Israel is not a banana republic. If you disagree with the policies of your government, then change the government.

Aloni: But you are helping the Shamir government.

Solarz: We provide aid in a variety of different forms to countries around the world whose policies we disagree with. We have disagreements with Japan, but we have fifty-thousand troops stationed over there and we've pledged to put the U.S. at nuclear risk should another country use nuclear threats against Japan. We should try to persuade governments that share our perspective.

Tikkun: Some people in the peace movement have indicated that Shamir uses the aid package as proof that he will always be able to bring home the money, regardless of pious statements made by various Israeli leaders. Shamir says to Israelis, "Don't pay attention to what some American critics say; that's unimportant. What counts is the bottom line—that we continue to bring home all the money we request."

Solarz: Changing Israeli policy is first and foremost the responsibility of the people of Israel. As to Shamir's ability to portray American criticisms as insubstantial, we may now be facing a new circumstance, since for the first time we are dealing with a U.S. president who appears to be willing to challenge Israeli policy. I think it may be very difficult in the future for the friends of Israel in the Congress to overcome continued presidential determination to link settlements to the question of the guarantees—even though I don't think that linkage is justifiable. The political reality is that a popular president, backed by public opinion—which President Bush clearly is in this instance—is very difficult if not impossible to overcome on an issue of this character. If Israel wants the guarantees and the President decides to be firm on this, it will be necessary for some kind of understanding to be reached between Shamir and Bush. And if this misunderstanding isn't resolved, chances are that Israel won't get the kind of unconditional guarantees that it seeks even though many of us in Congress would like to try to get those guarantees.

Segal: Solarz says that there are many issues to be negotiated, and settlement is just one of those issues. I believe this is a very naive perspective. There isn't any will on the part of the Likud government to negotiate seriously with the Palestinians, and it doesn't have any motivation to do so as long as it can continue to create new facts on the ground. The heart of the conflict is over land, and settlement is the process by which land is transferred from one party to another. Unless the settlement process on the West Bank is halted, the Likud has no motivation in the negotiation process to move toward any agreement. Under those circumstances, the Arab and Palestinian parties won't stay in negotiations. Nobody has a credible strategy other than linkage to affect the settlement policy over the long haul.

Now I want to address David Saperstein's arguments. First, there's the Pandora's box argument. But perhaps it's really the Pandora's box excuse for not really doing anything. He's arguing that there is tremendous fragility to American support for Israel, and that even if we are right on this issue, pursuing linkage would begin to cause the whole American-Israeli relationship to unravel. As another observer in Washington, I don't see it at all. Even this fight will be very tough for Bush to win, despite the fact that it's in the face of an outrageous settlement policy.

Second, Saperstein says linkage would not be effective. But I think the reason it would be effective is the unique circumstance in Israel—the incredible need for funds to settle Soviet Jews. Any government that, because of its ideological commitment to West Bank settlement, screws up its central responsibility to promote this immigration and handle the absorption well is going to pay a real price at the elections. This is really a unique moment of leverage.

Third, as to humanitarian aid—well, this really doesn't fit that category. This is not emergency food or tents—it's for long-term development within Israel to provide housing, jobs, roads, etc. It's not an emergency where you're dealing with a population whose lives are on the line; but if it were, and we thought that Soviet Jewish lives were on the line, then the response wouldn't be long-term development in Israel, but rather lifting the quotas that restrict the ability of Soviet Jews to come to the United States.

Saperstein: I've probably spoken to between fifty and seventy Senators and Congresspeople in the past few weeks, and I don't know a single one whose description of what's going on would support Jerry Segal's thesis here. The Pandora's box has already been opened. We have Senator Leahy and Congressman David Obey (D-Wis.) already talking about linkage on a broad number of issues. What members are hearing in the grass roots is, "Why *are* we giving so much aid to Israel?"—not only because of the settlements (they may not know or care that much about the settlements), but because foreign aid is generally unpopular. As to upping the quota of Soviet Jews coming to the U.S., such a demand would strain our relationship with other refugee communities that have equally valid claims on the available space—especially given the fact that we already have a very large quota, and the fact that these Jews do have another place to go, while most of the other refugee groups do not.

Aloni: Why should you put the responsibility for settling Soviet immigrants on the shoulders of the American public? And do you think that we can do this while still holding on to the West Bank?

Saperstein: I agree with you. The effort to abandon a land-for-peace plan and to hold on to land on the West Bank at the cost of precluding a peace agreement would be devastating to Israel. The question is not whether or not we should work to end the settlement policy—and the particularly provocative way that it is being carried out—which further alienates the American people. The question we are considering is whether the totality of American economic support for Israel is the most effective lever to effect that change, and whether the costs of using that lever outweigh the benefits.

Segal: The immigration of refugees into Israel is part of the dynamic through which the Israeli Right is in fact taking over the West Bank. So, morally speaking, can we be part of a process that involves taking over Palestinian land, and then call all this "humanitarian"?

Chazan: I disagree with Saperstein on the issue of effectiveness. Bush's attempt to create some linkage has been very effective—because, one, it signals to the government of Israel that it can't have everything, that it has to make priorities; and, two, it forces the government to make clear that it prefers holding the Territories to providing for Soviet absorption, and that is a policy that is extremely worrisome, not only to many Israelis but to a large section of world Jewry, and a slap in the face to the whole Zionist enterprise.

Saperstein: I agree with the goal of changing Israeli policy, but not with the means of using linkage to accomplish that change.

Chazan: But the linkage is already there, and made by Shamir all the time (for example, when he speaks of Soviet Jews as the way to deal with the demographic problem of too many Palestinians in a Greater Land of Israel). It's really problematic to try to separate a whole series of political issues—such as settlements, withdrawal from the Territories, Palestinian representation, and the peace process itself—from another issue that you call "humanitarian" (settling Soviet Jews) when these issues are already being connected not only by the government of the U.S. but by the government of Israel itself. We are not talking about an eventuality, but a fact—the linkage exists.

Tzaban: In order to ensure absorption of the immigrants, the humanitarian goal that we are talking about, we need more than ten billion dollars in loans—we need conditions under which investors from around the world feel that they can invest in Israel and create jobs. But in the circumstances that currently exist, with the uncertainties that are created by our struggle with the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states, there is no chance that these investments will be made. So the guarantees won't do it, unless there is peace.

Walzer: I favor linkage all around as a possible resource of American diplomacy, and I don't believe any great power can renounce a resource of that sort. We have to look at particular cases. If Egypt or Syria were acting in ways that were dangerous to Israel at some point in the near future, I would certainly support American threats to reduce aid in order to bring them around to a more promising policy. The same thing has to apply to Israel.

Saperstein: I was distinguishing between humanitarian aid and general assistance to a country. Humanitarian assistance going to the poor and the refugees should not

(Continued on p. 91)

FICTION

Schoom

Jonathan Wilson

A few months ago I was taken by a friend to the archaeological dig in the Beit She'an Valley. It was a warm summer morning. I had emerged unusually depressed from my therapy session with Dr. Schoom, but the anticipation of seeing the excavated city-fortress of Yodfat cheered me up. For two weeks only, the ruins of two-thousand-year-old streets and buildings were to be open to a variety of foreign specialists, but not to the public (the fear of damage was too great); after this, the site would be covered and closed.

My companion, Avital Lorch, had been working on the dig for about eighteen months, and sleeping with me for about half that time. Lately, things hadn't been going too well in our relationship, on account of my philandering. I hadn't *cheated*—we weren't married—and as I explained to Avital, she was away a lot at the dig. But neither she nor Dr. Schoom was impressed by my lame excuses. Schoom, of course, wanted to get to the bottom of my inconsistency. Avital didn't care why I had gone to bed with the waitress from The Little Souperie, or the art student, or the daughter of the cleaning woman (who had substituted for her mother one happy, fateful day), but she did think enough was enough. "Don't be a fool," she said. "Don't blow a good thing. Control yourself."

I might have mastered my desires better if Schoom hadn't kept falling asleep. I would be halfway through a session when he would start to nod off. It didn't matter that I was describing intense or dramatic moments—my father keeling over at my feet when I was nine, or Susan Cranston, my sister's best friend, slowly unzipping my fly and reaching into my pants when I was thirteen—his eyes would begin to glaze over, he would stifle a yawn, and soon enough, head thrown back and breathing deeply, he was gone. I would wait a few moments and then cough, or call "Dr. Schoom, Dr. Schoom." He would come to with a start. "Are you all right?" I would ask. He would inevitably reply, "What are you talking about?" and pretend that he hadn't missed a beat.

So I started to think that I was having affairs in order to keep Schoom awake: to give him something juicy to look forward to in my sessions. I told him as much. "I don't want to bore you," I said, "so I'm trying to lead an interesting life." "Ah yes," he replied, "the middle child desperate for his parents' attention, afraid that it is somewhere else." "Well," I said, "you have seemed *distracted* recently" (this was the nicest way I could think of to say "asleep"). "Not at all," he responded, "although your little joke with me may not be so far off the mark. What *do* all these love affairs have to do with me? Why can't you seem to spend a single night alone? And why do you feel so strongly the need to entertain me?" "You tell me," I said. "No," he replied, "*You* tell *me*." I tried another tack. "Could it be," I conjectured, "that I'm very attracted to women?" Schoom tilted his ancient head, with its monklike fringe of white hair, so that he was now viewing me almost sideways. "Do you really believe that?" he asked. Time was up.

One morning I arrived ten minutes early for my appointment. Oddly, the door to Schoom's office was minutely ajar. I heard a young woman's voice say, "And what's more, it's like a dungeon in here," and then she emerged, walking past me, where I sat in a canvas butterfly chair, without glancing my way. But I saw her: short brown hair, green eyes, ever so pretty, but hard too, with a purposeful stride, and a tuned-up body. "Bet he doesn't fall asleep with her," I thought.

So I had the Schoom problem (actually two Schoom problems; there's one I haven't told you about yet) and the fidelity problem, and somehow I was to understand they were linked. Never mind that on this morning's drive out of Jerusalem I was transported, as was so often the case, by the dusty blue light over the hills, the warm breeze, and some dizzying, mingled scent—petroleum and almond. "Let's stop in on my cousin," I said to Avital. "We need coffee."

Jonathan Wilson is at work on a book of short stories. He is associate professor of English at Tufts University.

My cousin Ruthie lived on Kibbutz Hakarosh, which had been founded in the mid-sixties by young immigrants from the Upper West Side–Jewish Left. These intellectual hippies were now full-fledged, ideologically strict kibbutzniks. No member of Hakarosh was allowed a VCR in their home; and when Ruthie's daughter, Noa, wanted to get contact lenses because she thought glasses made her look ugly, the kibbutz held a meeting and voted not to let her. Ruthie was a lover of socialist constraint, but even she had hoped that her daughter would prevail.

Avital turned off at the Sha'ar Hagai junction and we were soon sitting on the veranda of Ruthie's little bungalow sipping *botz* (which is coffee named after mud) with one of Ruthie's neighbors. When my cousin finally showed up she was dressed in Bedouin clothes and accompanied by an old man, also in Bedouin outfit. "Hello," I said. "Purim was two months ago, what's with the getup?" "Oh no," she said, "my luck. You."

Ruth was not a frivolous person, and she thought I was. Nevertheless she patiently offered me an explanation. The kibbutz grew olives but the pressing was done on the West Bank. She always went and oversaw the process, but now it was unsafe for her to go *as herself*. Her Bedouin partners, with whom the kibbutz split the profits, had arranged for her to be accompanied to the Arab town of Ramallah, but in disguise. "Look," she said, "Arafat was once smuggled out of Jordan as a woman, and nobody spotted him; I can certainly make it."

This deception reminded me of my other Schoom problem. My therapist wanted me to steal something for him, and that was why I had been particularly done in after the morning session. I told him where I was going and with whom, and he woke right up. "Listen," he said, "can you bring something back for me? You know I am a collector." I did know. His office was filled with artifacts: pottery shards, ancient utensils, slivers of Roman glass. "I'm an American economist," I said, "not a thief. I came here two years ago to advise the Israeli government, not to steal from it." "Don't be ridiculous," he said. "You are a reactive depressive with an overdeveloped libido." In eighteen months this was the first diagnosis he had offered me. He was very agitated. "Look," he said, relenting a little. "I'm not asking you to plunder the graves of the pharaohs; a memento is all I request. You know very well that the site is to be closed. Bring something from the ground. What will it matter? The government, quite rightly, is going to let the city lie dormant for eternity. All we laymen shall have then is our photographs. *You* have been offered a great gift. You are going to be in *the place*. If you could return to me just a fraction of that gift, in the form of an earthenware fragment. Really, is that such a big deal?"

I didn't make Schoom any promises. I thought I'd see how things panned out. At Ruthie's place, where the veranda roof had been constructed out of old orange crates and there was absolutely nothing worth swiping, we lingered a while over our coffee. Ruth told me that when we were kids she hated coming to my house because my parents always made her take her shoes off so that our rugs wouldn't get damaged. Then she told me that I used to sweat out of the pores at the sides of my nostrils every time I ate a certain type of candy. Who needed to hear this stuff? Why dredge up the details? What did it lead to? Who did it help? In the distance, a tractor laboriously made its way up the side of a steep hill, pulling a heavy load. "There goes David with the cow fodder," said Ruth.

Meanwhile, Avital had been describing the Beit She'an excavations to Dorit, the neighbor, and Farhad, the Bedouin. They had uncovered, she said, along with the usual arrowheads and coins, the remains of a pottery! The prized discovery was a set of intact oil lamps made from molds in the Middle-Roman period. Almost two thousand years ago, for the first time, because of a new technique, ancient Palestinian potters had been able to depict a variety of raised designs on the upper surface of the lamps. The results were stunning. There were representations of Torah shrines, an amphora within an arch, decorative grape patterns, and, most unusually, what looked like a reclining figure (although it couldn't be) with its head resting on the pinched spout set for a wick. Dorit wanted to know more; Farhad gazed around as if nothing that was being said could possibly have anything to do with him.

Two men in blue work shirts began to approach us down the winding dirt path that led to Ruthie's house. "OK," I said to Avital. "Time to go." "Excuse me, Daniel, but I'm in the middle of a conversation." I always got a little nervous on the kibbutz. I had this feeling that if you stayed too long someone would come and get you to work. One minute you could be relaxing with a relative, the next minute it was *you* dragging the cow food up the hill. Avital talked a while longer while I watched the work-shirt men until they were safely out of sight.

After a while, we got up and walked across a cracked cement basketball court to our car. Avital turned the key in the ignition and waved good-bye to Ruthie. "Hold up," I said. I was a little worried about my cousin, and decided to tell her so. I leaned out of the window. "You're all I've got in this country," I said. "I don't think you should play dress-up in the Occupied Territories."

Ruthie raised the long, richly embroidered sleeve of her Bedouin dress, and gave me the finger. "Drive on," I said to Avital.

The sun was high and strong as we crossed the valley toward the site. I looked at Avital dexterously maneuvering the car around tight curves and down narrow lanes. When she turned her head the three stud earrings that she wore in her right ear caught the sun and sparkled. What a smart, beautiful woman she was. So why the need for the others? The truth was, I knew the answer. I wanted to be enlightened. I slept with other women because I was fascinated by their stories. Don't get me wrong, the sex mattered—sometimes it was great and sometimes it wasn't—but what I especially cherished were certain moments of intimacy, lying in bed afterward, listening. It always amazed me how people who were strangers a week, a day, or even a couple of hours earlier, would reveal their most secret thoughts after making love. For me, living in Jerusalem had become like the Arabian Nights. Every woman I met had a story, and every story was an education. I wanted to stay in school.

The dig, for a layman like myself, turned out to be a bust. A grid had been set out over the site with steel rods. Layer after layer of soil had been painstakingly removed to reveal—what? A few crumbling walls, and something Avital told me was once a hearth. I tried to conceal my disappointment. I didn't want to act like an ignoramus, but I guess I tend to do better with what is here, rather than with what you have to imagine out of the past.

Avital led me past a few small trenches, left over from the trial digging, toward a deep pit. "The pottery!" she proclaimed with genuine enthusiasm. We descended a wooden ladder and joined a huddle of people carrying pointing trowels, shovels, and buckets. When Avital arrived she gave some directions in Hebrew and the helpers dispersed to begin their careful scraping of the layers of the past. "Well!" I said. "Some place! Remarkable! Truly remarkable." "We've found more than four thousand fragments here," Avital announced. "That's impressive," I replied. "*Four* thousand." As soon as I spoke I knew that I had put the emphasis on the wrong word, a dead giveaway of my utter boredom. But Avital's first language wasn't English, so perhaps she didn't notice.

I hadn't forgotten about Schoom. In fact, I found myself casing the place, like the burglar he wanted me to be. Now that I was here, stealing something really didn't seem such a big deal. What was one shard give or take four thousand? Let the old guy have his pleasures. He had to listen to me going on about my extraordinary conquests day in and day out. That must have been a trial. True, my sex life was getting me into all kinds of trouble. But the fact remained that *I* was young and he was old. I was fucking frequently and he, by the looks of him, was in deep misery. If he wanted to caress a two-thousand-year-old pot—then let him.

Am I saying I stole because I felt sorry for Schoom? Maybe. But there was something else: the girl from the waiting room. I had this weird fantasy that bringing home the Schoom-shard would give me a conversation opener with the gorgeous patient who preceded me. "Hey—I stole for him," or "Excuse me a moment but I wonder if we could have coffee after my session. There's something urgent I need to discuss with you about Dr. Schoom." Whatever the reasons, as we were about to make our way out of the pottery I knelt down, ostensibly to tie my sneaker. Avital was halfway up the ladder. I had chosen to stop close to a worker who had collected several fragments on a tray next to him. As he concentrated on his scraping, I stretched out my hand and covered the largest piece of pottery I could see. I stood up and in one smooth gesture pocketed the prize. I walked around slowly until my heart had returned to normal speed, then I headed toward the ladder. When I reached the top, Avital was nowhere to be seen.

One of the archaeologists had noticed her talking with the head of the dig, Avram Fleischer. A telephonist at the site office thought that she had glimpsed her running past the window. The guard in the parking lot told me that he had seen her getting into her car. She had shouted, "Tell him I couldn't wait anymore." "Was it an emergency?" I asked, somewhat baffled. "Maybe," he said. "She seemed in a huge hurry."

There was nothing for it but to make my own way back to Jerusalem. It was Friday. The workers from the dig were all leaving early to get home before the Sabbath. I picked up a ride to a bus stop on the highway. A blur of traffic was speeding in both directions but there was no sign of a bus. I stood in the shade of a eucalyptus tree and took the shard out of my pocket. It hadn't been properly cleaned yet. It looked like, well, a bit of a pot. Maybe, I thought, it's a part of one of those lamps Avital was talking about. Two thousand years ago someone made a little halo of light around himself with what I was holding. And what did he see? The body of the woman beside him. Yes, it was a bedside lamp. I was convinced.

By the time I got to Jerusalem it was dusk. I called Avital from the Egged station but there was no answer. I began to walk home. Then, suddenly, I changed direction. I would drop off the booty at Schoom's place. It was best to get rid of the evidence before catching up with Avital.

The road to Schoom's took me through the Orthodox neighborhood of Me'a She'arim. Its narrow streets were clogged with Chasidim on their way to prayers. Buzzing blackflies. I made my way through courtyards flickering with candlelight, past empty yeshivas, shuttered storefronts, kerchiefed mothers dragging their last recalcitrant children from cobblestone to hearth. At some point I lost my way and found myself in a cul-de-sac. Two poorly inscribed signs had been hammered above a wooden doorway. The top one gave the name Yeshiva Tarfon; the second read, "You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it." Was this profound? I wasn't sure.

On Ha'bashim Street, I paused outside Schoom's gate. There was a sweet, almost sickly scent of honeysuckle in the air. The street was deserted. The pink dome of the Ethiopian church loomed over Schoom's little house, like a nipple above the obsessions of his patients. I descended the concrete steps at the far end of the analyst's flower-filled yard, and entered the waiting room.

Schoom, of course, was not a religious man. He held sessions until late in the day on Fridays. When I arrived someone was in his office. Again, my absent-minded shrink, my *sleepy* shrink, had failed to close his door properly. Again, I heard voices. Schoom was talking, very directly. It must have been the end of the session, that point when, after all the silences and sighs, Schoom would finally, almost reluctantly, summarize some of *his* thoughts. "You cannot possibly go," he was saying. "You have already told me that you believe this is not something your mother would have wished you to do. I understand that you do not want to be controlled from beyond the grave. But there are other considerations. Do you think that I will be here when you return? I assure you that it is most unlikely." (Ah yes, I thought, the old "interrupt-the-therapy-and-you'll-never-get-back-on-track" routine.) "And this man," Schoom continued, "this Yacki. Do you really believe that you will lead a productive life in San Diego with a jeweller-hippie? You, who spent four years at the Rubin Academy of Music. And what did your dream tell you? Your frightening dream that you have just recounted. According to your own words, it meant that someone was about to make a terrible mistake." There was silence. Someone, patient or analyst, about to make a terrible mistake or not, shifted in their chair. I sat in the advancing purple darkness of Schoom's waiting room. Then she emerged, and, braver than any patient that I had ever imagined, she turned and yelled through the door, "I can't bear it anymore. I want to be free." In a blur of black miniskirt and black T-shirt she was gone.

READING THE BOOK

MAKING THE BIBLE A TIMELESS TEXT

BURTON L. VISOTZKY

"The range and surprise of Scriptural interpretation... the play of the intellect at its boldest."
—CYNTHIA OZICK

"A delightful guide
to understanding the world of the great rabbis who gave us the Mishna, the Talmud, and other masterpieces of Jewish learning."
—Raymond E. Brown,
Auburn Distinguished Professor Emeritus,
Union Theological Seminary

"Excellent...
written clearly and with wit, it abounds with elucidating anecdotes and is simply a very pleasurable read."—Professor Avigdor Shinan,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In paperback, wherever books are sold. Anchor Books

A division of the Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

I knocked lightly and put my head around the door. Schoom was seated in shadow behind his desk, his face in his hands. I entered the room tentatively. "Dr. Schoom." He looked up but did not appear to register my presence. "I brought you what you wanted." Schoom gave me a long look. When I finally came into focus he seemed to make a sudden decision. "You," he said (just as my cousin Ruthie had said it). "Of course. Go after her. You, who claim to know so much about women. Go after her. Tell her, please, what a fool she is being. Go. Go!" "But I have your antiquity." I began to search around in my pockets. "Never mind. I can't listen to you now. Do as I say, please. Go after her."

I went. I sprinted down Ha'bashim Street, lifting my knees high toward my chest, as I had been taught to do in high school for maximum speed. I pumped my arms and puffed like a steam train. But to where? I chose the un-Orthodox direction, Jaffa Road. And yes, there she was, not too far off, turning down an alleyway next to a falafel and schwarma stand where the bright pink torso of a lamb was turning on a spit. I ran, dodging in and out of late shoppers on their way home, loaded down with vegetables and bunches of flowers. Schoom had ordered me to the chase. He had authorized my desires. What luck!

I caught up with her outside a shoe store called Sandalaria where she had stopped to check out the window display. "Excuse me," I said, catching my breath. "I've come from Dr. Schoom. He sent me. I mean, I wanted to come anyway. But he asked me. In any case I was going to ask you." "What do you want? Who are you?" Her voice was full of irritation, but no surprise—she had been hit on before. I couldn't very well, at this point, tell her not to go to San Diego with Yacki (what was all that about anyway? The crack in the door had opened into a wide fissure of broken confidentiality), so I said, "It's a long story and it concerns Dr. Schoom. I wonder if we could sit somewhere for a while?" "You're one of Hillel's patients, aren't you?" she replied. "I've seen you in the waiting room." "Yes," I said, pleased to acknowledge that we had therapy in common, but disturbed at the same time by her easy use of Schoom's first name. With me it was always *Mr.* Winaker and *Dr.* Schoom.

We walked up the street and sat in the Ta'amon Café between two tables occupied by chess players finishing up their games. The place was closing. The wizened old waitress was bustling around looking like she didn't want to take another order. I felt pressured and I didn't quite know where to begin. I was trying to avoid looking down my companion's shirt (I didn't want to come off like a pig), but every time I looked into those green eyes I got unhinged. I mumbled some stuff about being an economist (she looked bored), mouthed a few platitudes about Israel, and then plucked out of the air, "How long have you been in therapy with Dr. Schoom?" She started to laugh. "Therapy?" she replied. "All my life. He's my father."

OK, OK. If you're thinking I was turned on by this information, you're right. I experienced a brief moment of decline, a perceptible sliding down on the parabola of my desire when the incest taboo first kicked in, but this was quickly reversed. Schoom's daughter! The possibilities (the incestuous possibilities) were endless. There was also a feeling of larceny. He had made me steal, and in doing so he had stolen something from me. Now, I would take from him.

So I launched into my seductive rap—and I could be quite charming. ("You turn your aggression into charm." —Dr. Hillel Schoom.) After all, seduction was almost an occupation with me and I worked hard at it. "What are you on," Avital had asked in one of our bitter moments, "a sexual crusade?"

Aviva (that was her name) heard me out while I name-dropped, sprinkled a couple of witticisms, and described my must-see Jerusalem apartment ("set in a walled garden, the scent of oleanders, olive tree overhanging the balcony, once owned by an artist, eccentric landlady former mistress of Moshe Dayan, stars beautiful from the *mirpesset,* blah blah blah"), then she paused, just like her father, before speaking. "Look," she said. "You seem like an intelligent man, but I can tell you right now that I'm not attracted to you sexually." The waitress had appeared at my shoulder. "Bruised ego, please," I said, "and could you put a little crushed testicle into the coffee?" "Same for you sweetheart?" she asked Aviva. Aviva nodded in decline.

My drink and check arrived simultaneously. I realized that, in the general sense of rush, I had failed to do Schoom's bidding. Aviva must be wondering why her father had sent me after her. But what could I say, "Don't go to San Diego with Yacki. Come home with me instead"? It was ridiculous. "Listen," Aviva was saying. "I really have to go. So if you could give me my father's message." I loved her rolled r's and singsong Israeli accent, so different from her father's Euro-snob sibilated utterances. I stared at her. Around her neck she wore a bright cobalt blue enameled Star of David, no doubt one of Yacki's creations. "Your father," I stuttered, "wanted me" (long pause) "to give you this!" Triumphantly, I produced the shard from my pocket. Then I improvised: "He didn't have time to take it. He was preoccupied with an emergency—a phone call. He asked me to give it to you. He wants you to hold it for him, then return it to him. As soon as possible." She took the piece

of pottery in her hand, stood up and dropped it in her leather bag. "OK," she said. "No problem." "Any chance we could go out one night this week?" I begged pathetically. "How old are you?" she asked. "Thirty-eight." "You need to be younger." I smiled virtuously, as if I would make every effort to do as she wished. Then I put my hand to my head and looked down despairingly. Her tanned legs, strapped up calf-high with the long lavender ribbons of her espadrilles, disappeared through the café door.

When I got home there was a message on my answering machine. It was Avital. She spoke in a trembling voice that said, "If you do not return what you stole I will report you to the police." Shame and disgrace! I dialed her number in a panic. I had no idea what I would say to her. How had she found out anyway? Some shifty-eyed digger must have seen me. I let the phone ring ten, twenty times. No answer. I was sweating so much my feet felt as if they were swimming in my sandals. There was nothing for it but to return to Schoom's. But I had to take a shower first. I stood under the weak drizzle that was the best I could ever get in Jerusalem, and tried to scrub away my guilt. Dressing, I chose a white shirt and cream-colored pants. How could a person as clean as me go to jail?

I left my apartment and ran around the back of the Hamashbir department store to Ben Yehuda Street. The cafés had all pulled in their tables and chairs; the center of town was deserted. There was this overwhelming Sabbath atmosphere that gets me every time, even though I am a person who believes we are lucky there is no God. Anyway, the atmosphere, whatever it was—a violet-stained tranquil path, dust and blessings—slowed me to a walk. I crossed Zion Square and headed up the hill to Schoom's street. I felt momentarily pulled up from my troubles. As usual, this elevation was accomplished by the surface of things: the pink stone of the houses under starlight, the scent of jasmine, the distant cry of the *muezzin*—all the heady stuff that the city had to offer. But what lay under the sights, smells, and sounds? Something about the place that I didn't want to know? Something about myself?

Schoom's office was locked, so I had to go to the front of the house. I noticed immediately a brightly colored, oversized mezuzza on the portal of his door. "Former owners," I thought, but no, a matching ceramic nameplate—DR. HILLEL SCHOOM, entwined with painted flowers—had been nailed above the knocker.

Schoom came to the door. His shirt was uncharacteristically open, there were patches of sweat under his arms, and his face looked drawn and tired. "Well," he said, "did you convince her?" I wanted to say, "You're out of your mind," but it seemed unnecessary. I think he knew. I let him lead me into his sitting room—leather chairs, kilims, subtle abstracts on the walls (originals by local artists). Shrinks, I thought, always tasteful. It was part of the whole quiet, restrained, unobtrusive thing.

Schoom looked like he might shake me if I didn't speak, so I said, "I'm in bigger trouble than your daughter." I told him the story. I expected him to take the blame, or at least part of the blame, and then walk over to the phone and call Aviva. Instead, he gave a short, sharp, unhappy laugh. "Well," he said, "now, at last, you have a real problem." "What's that supposed to mean?" "Oh," he waved his hand at me, "surely you must be aware of your own silliness. This business with women. Your ceaseless talk about this one and that one. Your ridiculous daily conquests. You are obsessed with the quotidian. Do you know that in your year-and-a-half of therapy you have not once taken the opportunity to present me with a dream?" "That's not true. What about the challah that fought my father's prayer shawl, and had the number seven cut into one of its braids?" Schoom looked at me with contempt. How, I wondered, could he disdain a dream? I thought they were value-free. "You want to alter your behavior," Schoom continued, "or at least you say you do. But you can't change the present without coming to terms with the past. I have tried, you know, to direct you back, but you resist. All you want to do is tell me stories about bed. I *know* the bed." "What about when my father collapsed? You fell asleep." "Nonsense, nonsense. I was waiting for the memory to lead you somewhere, to a *reflection*. But no, your father collapses in your memory and you can go no further. The next minute you are again plotting a seduction. Perhaps there is a connection between the two thoughts, but how could you possibly find it? Every time you have a piece of the past in your hands you throw it away."

It was a piece of the past that had got me into all this trouble. But what was the use of arguing with Schoom? He had nastily transformed from therapist to antagonist. And the realization had slowly dawned on me (the "resistance" was great) that Schoom *didn't like me*. "Look," I said, "I didn't come here to be scolded. I have to retrieve the shard. Please call your daughter, or else give me her number or address." "My daughter, your savior, has doubtless already passed on what you gave her to her feckless boyfriend. He, the marvelous Yacki, who knows even less than you about the world he wanders through, is probably stringing the shard for a pendant at this very moment." Oh, give them a break, I thought, a break from all this knowledge and history. Let them

wander in the San Diego desert and smoke dope. Where was it written that everyone has to be weighed down by the stones of Jerusalem? Let them float on their backs in the Pacific wearing nothing but their pendants and earrings. To hell with the past.

Schoom sat down heavily in one of his swivel armchairs. "You will not find them," he said. "They are leaving tonight for California. This, I see, my daughter did not tell you. They are probably at the airport right now."

Ben Gurion was forty minutes from Jerusalem. It was never easy to find a taxi on a Friday night. I had no money in my pockets. Schoom had no idea what airline they were using. My situation was hopeless.

Outside, a summer thundershower was sending fat drops of rain onto the dusty sidewalk. A police car followed me down the street (they know already!) and then turned off up a hill toward the Old City. There was nothing for it but to plead with Avital to be merciful. The rain blew in sheets across Jaffa Road staining the low buildings apple-grey. My shirt was soaked through, transparent. I walked to a phone booth, but didn't have a token. I had to call collect. I heard the operator say my name. There was a short wait and then Avital, sounding extremely angry, said, "Have you got it?"

It had been a long day. There was water dripping off my head onto my glasses. I started to go through the whole thing. I think I began by saying "I was sitting outside Schoom's office ..." but Avital interrupted me. "What you stole was valuable. It came from the most productive layer of the site. How could you do that? Do you even know what you stole? You took the intact handle of a two-thousand-year-old oil lamp!" I was about to say, "I thought it might be something like that," but being pleased with myself for guessing right was not an appropriate response. "Well, it's gone," I said. "It's on its way to California." Avital started to speak very fast. I put the phone back on its hook.

Where to go? The rain had eased up a little, but miniature flash floods were rolling through the gutters. Only one person could get me out of this mess: Schoom. But I had nothing left to say to him. And he was clearly finished with me. Nevertheless I found myself returning once again to Habashim Street, and once again I stood outside his door. There were no lights at the front of the house and no one answered when I knocked. I squeezed around a side alley, scratching my arms on the bushes that overhung Schoom's neighbor's wall. A diffuse, fuzzy light filled a square of window halfway down the side of the house. An upturned tin bucket that was lying in the alley gave me the pedestal I needed. Two candles were burning on a desk. Otherwise, the room was in darkness. Schoom was bent low over his work. Carefully, with meticulous, guarded movements of his hands, Schoom was cleaning the shard. □

For my Son's Bris

Kathryn Hellerstein

If you had been born Adam, you'd be whole,
For Adam was created circumcised.
And Adam's mother did not stand aside
To weep as her small son, bound to a board,
Was passed like a fragrant lamb for sacrifice
Away from her, from hand to trusted hand
Of *kvaterin* to *kvater* to *sandak*
Who holds the infant for the two-edged blade.
Adam had no mother but the Earth,
Who schooled him in her creatures needing names,
Forgetting, though, to teach him and his Eve
Obedience. Thus, Adam's naughty bite
Restored this innocent pink skin to you,
My son. You seemed just perfect to my eyes
When you were lifted from your watery bed
Shouting the end of nine months being made—
Your clamorous cry like Jonah's whale-bound song,
Like the dove's call when it grasped the leafy twig
From waters endless as the eye of God.
Complete as you are to me—your mother, maker—
Your wholeness is a sign that you are not
Yet perfect in the community of men
That counts your father in its covenant.
Now I stand here, like Sarah, watching as
Red dust kicked up by donkeys swirls around
The figures of my husband, son, and men.
Their shadows, shrinking in the morning glare,
Head toward the bluish hint of mountain, where
God will revise the oath forced from the father
And make His promise to the future sons.
There Sarah stands, alone. And you, my boy,
Are welcomed for your coming with a knife
That cuts your sweet skin raw, to start your life.

Kathryn Hellerstein's poems have appeared in Poetry, Tikkun, *and* Without a Single Answer: Poems of Contemporary Israel *(Judah Magnes Museum, 1990). Her translations of Yiddish poetry have been published in* Tikkun, Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, *and* American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology *(University of California Press, 1986). She teaches Yiddish at the University of Pennsylvania.*

Demagoguery in America: Wrong Turns in the Politics of Race

Jim Sleeper

Research for this piece was supported by a grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

In the late 1930s, Irving Howe and his generation of democratic socialists concluded, to their dismay, that they would have to spend some of their best energies not on building a more decent, socialist world, but on defeating Stalinism—on trying, that is, to rescue the very hope of socialism from those who, starting from wholly legitimate grievances and rage, had bloodied its vision virtually beyond recognition.

Inevitably, this decision put democratic socialists on the same "side" as right-wing anticommunists in certain disputes. They were all too easily condemned as apologists for economic royalism and even fascism. The condemnation came not only from Stalinists but also from seemingly more moderate, honorable Americans who had chosen, out of elite guilt, naive idealism, or stubborn loyalty to the original vision, to excuse or even celebrate the Communists' brutality. Now that the peoples of the Soviet Union have spoken for themselves, we know that Howe and his colleagues had no morally or politically defensible choice but to risk the contempt of the parlor Left and the condescension of the Right. Democratic socialists may feel exhausted, but, in large measure, they have been vindicated.

The time has come for black activists and all who support civil-rights struggles to face up to a more modest, yet in some respects equally dismaying, mission: that of isolating and defeating much of what now passes for black protest leadership in New York City and some other parts of America. Now more than at any time in recent memory, progressive politics must dedicate itself to building an electoral coalition strong enough to reverse the federal abdication of responsibility for cities and the poor; destructive economic practices hypocritically justified as part of the workings of free markets; and, amid the devastation caused by these forces, a deepening of racial and ethnic hostilities that blights lives and forecloses coalition politics.

Jim Sleeper, an editorial writer for New York Newsday, *is the author of* The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York *(W.W. Norton & Co., 1990).*

Instead of helping to build such coalitions, black demagogues have embraced a series of disastrous misjudgments and destructive tactics, which I want to describe with reference to the events of August and September in Brooklyn's Crown Heights. Exploiting deep fault lines in what is now called "identity politics," these pretenders to serious leadership have conned other black leaders who should know better into systematically burning their community's bridges to feminists, Asians, liberal Jews, Hispanics, and, more importantly, to everyone who aspires to share the obligations and rewards of a just, pluralist society.

The Reverend Al Sharpton, the Reverend Herbert Daughtry, and street activist Sonny Carson, the attorneys Alton Maddox, Jr., C. Vernon Mason, and Colin Moore, and other highly visible demagogues, are not the only ones responsible. So are a host of apparently more moderate leaders, white as well as black, who have indulged them. Together, these groups have overshadowed and often intimidated a third group of black leaders: those who have been working in neighborhood organizations, churches, labor unions, and electoral politics to reweave the black community's devastated civic and political fabric, amid deepening economic depression and white contempt. The eclipse of these constructive activists has dimmed the prospects for the reemergence of the kind of black leadership provided by A. Philip Randolph or E. Franklin Frazier—leaders who, faced with the much more intractable poverty and white racism of fifty years ago, managed to forge true movements for justice.

Because such leaders are not emerging in New York and some other areas, the period of black moral dominance within the liberal and civil-rights communities in those places is ending. We can argue about the reasons, but we cannot turn back the clock. Others must take up the initiative, much as Dennis Rivera, a Puerto Rican socialist, saved New York's Local 1199 of the Hospital and Health Care Employees Union from extensive damage by Doris Turner's pseudo-black-nationalist demagoguery a few years ago.

Drawing the line against a black misleadership that trades in lies, vilifies innocent parties, silences dissenters, and dehumanizes real and putative opponents

will require soul-searching and courage on the part of black progressives and those of us who would join them. We will have to endure being miscast as accomplices of such racists as New York's Republican Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who seldom misses a chance to bait black demagogues. As we try to hammer out a new progressive consensus capable of touching mainstream America, we will sometimes be vilified as Uncle Toms or racists. And just as democratic socialists had to struggle not only against Stalinists but also against Stalinism's fashionable, sometimes eloquent apologists, so we will find ourselves challenging many blacks and whites whose naive deference to the misplaced agendas of identity politics empowers the demagogues.

Black demagogues and the writers and politicians who indulge them are incapable of practicing a serious, healing politics of justice. Their intimations of a common human enterprise are blocked by their pain, which they embroider endlessly, almost lovingly.

But it is precisely because racism, economic injustice, and conservative politics are such formidable enemies that leaders groping for an alternative politics cannot afford to indulge fantasies of ethnic or racial destiny that fracture potential coalitions for social change. They must learn to distinguish between group psychodramas, which have their place in communal theaters or churches, and the more farsighted interracial organizing and discourse, based on transracial truths, that are so desperately needed in pluralist arenas—in workplaces and courts, at the polls and in the streets.

Progressive politics simply can't make headway in a pluralist society without keeping certain commitments. One is to rational analysis—that is, to the primacy of admittedly provisional, evolving public truths over the mythic, communal ones enshrouded in racial narratives. Another is to the defense of individual over group rights in a context of civic and moral obligation to people across race lines—the right, for example, to dissent from one's own community, without fear of material harm, in order to protest a clear injustice. Yet, even on college campuses, where it is at its most benign, identity politics too often mystifies and divides. It too often mischaracterizes rational analysis and individual dissent from group norms as "Eurocentric" impositions simply because, by accidents of history, they come to us most directly from the European Enlightenment. Intending to mount liberating Afrocentric and other narratives against "hegemonic" racist ideas, practitioners of identity politics often draw their targets too broadly, attacking the very underpinnings of their own freedom in what is, after all—as they themselves insist—a diverse society. In so doing, they play into the hands of those who have been huckstering separate racial scenarios of truth to consolidate an illusory and destructive power.

"Who controls the past, controls the future," Orwell wrote in *1984*. We all know that history written by its "winners" works in this way. What this bloody century ought to have taught us is that the narratives of "losers" have a similarly destructive potential, that the oppressed can fight as blindly and as brutally as the oppressor. Serious history always struggles to escape this dilemma by resisting the service of ideological or ethnic ends. Its truths are written from the vantage of both "winners" and "losers" in communities of scholars who have the courage and the wisdom to balance tragedy and desire through an evolving discourse among peers. Even as we struggle to enrich and correct that never-completed consensus, we need the courage to defend it, in all its imperfection, against any self-proclaimed purity that masks brutality, whether it comes wrapped in a "great white male" theory of history or in a mythos of noble black and brown insurgency against domination. Counterintuitive though it may seem, we must sometimes speak truth to powerlessness, which can become as blind as power itself.

The public debate about slavery that was ratcheted up recently by City College professor Leonard Jeffries's allusions to Jewish control of the trade made this point well. International slavery turns out to have been an ecumenical business, the commodity market of its day. It was invented largely by Arab Muslims; instituted legally and financially in the West by Christians; enthusiastically adopted by Africans who sold their brethren; and bankrolled in part by Sephardi Jews who cornered much of the capital behind the sugar processing industry, which brought black slaves to the West Indies. Jeffries exaggerates the role of the Jews in slave trading for purposes closer to home and to his own personal experience (which, in keeping with the premises of identity politics, he conflates with racial truth). His identity-driven version of history is about as truthful as that of a white racist or black nationalist historian of the future looking back on the New York of the 1990s, seeing a black mayor, a black Ford Foundation president, a few black CEOs, and scores of black

vice presidents for community affairs—and concluding that blacks had shaped the urban capitalist agenda.

This is just the kind of distortion identity politics flirts with all the time. And it is in the streets and hard-pressed institutions of urban America that such distortions have taken truly ominous—I would say tribal—turns. There, as on campus, champions of identity politics claim to counterpose racial memories and truths to liberal society's insidious lies. But in the hands of a demagogic leadership, the intended social reform degenerates into a tit-for-tat recapitulation of the very wrongs it seeks to undo.

What protections do those who would carry their personal and racial narratives, unsullied by rational criticism, into academic and legal discourse offer against such a disaster? What do they say to Jeffries, and to the Reverend Al Sharpton and to Sonny Carson when they carry Jeffries's theories into shakedowns of Korean stores or riots in Crown Heights? How do they counter George Bush's cynical use of the Voting Rights Act in order to create legislative-district apartheid—and to increase the number of all-white, potentially GOP seats—by packing minorities into racially gerrymandered districts in the name of black or Latino empowerment? How, indeed, when civil-rights groups driven by identity politics are already jumping at the bait? (In New York, some Hispanic activists are willing to contemplate a bizarrely shaped, nominally Latino district, which would throw Democratic representatives Stephen Solarz and Charles Schumer into the same electoral arena, thereby costing New York City one of these men's legislative clout.)

Some of identity politics' most serious assaults have been against the criminal courts, which the demagogues, with some justice, say are permeated with racism. But it is one thing to uncover and denounce racism in the criminal-justice system. It is quite another to concoct perversely comforting racial case narratives that falsify evidence, twist testimony, and intimidate witnesses, all in order to "prove" to blacks that the system will never work for them. That is precisely what black protest leaders have done in the cases of Howard Beach, Tawana Brawley, Bensonhurst, Central Park, the Korean boycott, and Crown Heights. But once they've stymied justice in order to dramatize racism, what next? Having whipped their followers into a frenzy, they have no answer. And they offer no alliances, for they have alienated people of other colors—and, indeed, many blacks—who desperately seek a criminal-justice system free of lies and intimidation.

There is, of course, a signal and profound difference between Stalinists and the black misleadership I am describing: Far from controlling the state and its means of



Crown Heights after Gavin Cato's death: Can New York's blacks and Jews reclaim civic political debate in a climate of hatred and demagoguery?

imposing terror, as the Bolsheviks eventually did, black demagogues will never win such power in America. Like Stalinists, they have managed to silence black dissenters and ruin the lives of innocent whites against whom they bear false witness. But they have not been able to prevent black voters from repudiating their strategies, again and again, in the privacy of the polls. Aren't they really too marginal and powerless, then, to worry about? Anyway, aren't they just the media creations of racists who seek a foil for their own depredations?

At best, these rhetorical questions embody half-truths, unsatisfying not only to those Jews who have abandoned such speculations since the killing of Yankel Rosenbaum in Crown Heights, but to all decent people. The demagogues' tactics have so completely foreclosed any possibility of interracial coalitions in New York that Sharpton and his cohorts may as well have been working for D'Amato and Bush. And since New York City's two black weeklies and the talk shows on its premier black radio station, WLIB, relentlessly indoctrinate tens of thousands of readers and listeners in special racial truths, this brand of identity politics substantially chills debate within the black community itself.

When, for example, state Assemblyman Roger Green denounced Sharpton during the Brawley affair for likening New York's attorney general to Hitler, Green's chairmanship of the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus was immediately contested by a black state senator whose district overlapped his. (She withdrew her candidacy after a few days, not wanting, she said, to project to the public an impression of black division.) Ordinary blacks who challenged the veracity of

Brawley's story were vilified by talk-show hosts and newspaper polemicists. It took a black reporter widely respected in his community, *Newsday*'s Les Payne, to expose the hoax in terms that made black dissent possible.

After a brave black civil-rights attorney, Michael Meyers, warned publicly during the Jeffries affair that black leaders were failing to speak out because they wrongly, obsessively fear being cast as tools of the white establishment, he was deluged with hate mail. In the rest of the country, black political discourse has become greatly diversified through the work of such disparate figures as Cornel West, Shelby Steele, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry, law professors Randall Kennedy and Stephen Carter, and many others; but there has been no such flowering in New York. Too many people are afraid. Similarly, blacks whose politics is at odds with that of the demagogues have learned to "work around" them, not confront them, when their carnivals are running at fever pitch.

For all these reasons, we must fight a two-front battle, against black demagogues (and those who indulge them), as well as against racists (and those who indulge them). Nowhere was the case for doing so clearer than in the Crown Heights story.

"Here we go again," groaned a late-August front-page *New York Post* headline when Sharpton announced that Yosef Lifsh was driving while intoxicated. Lifsh, a chasidic Jew, had run a red light; his car bounced off another car, and then crushed to death Gavin Cato, a seven-year-old black boy in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood. The *Post*'s sense of déjà vu was prompted, of course, by memories of the wildly false charges circulated by Sharpton and some other black protest leaders in the criminal-justice cases I have mentioned.

Sharpton's intoxication charge and Carson's claim that Lifsh didn't have a driver's license were designed to justify black demands for the arrest and indictment of Lifsh under New York's remarkably lax laws governing criminal liability in traffic accidents. But the accusations immediately blew up in the activists' faces—and only partly because Lifsh did have a driver's license and had been tested negatively for intoxication immediately after the crash. The activists' scenario collapsed when the press found that the same lax traffic laws that protected Lifsh had also protected errant black motorists who had killed Chasidim, one a young boy, in the same neighborhood in the preceding five years. Besides, as the *Post*'s headline suggested, most of the city had by now caught on to the demagogues' tactics.

Then, too, in the minds of most decent New Yorkers, the accident, while tragic, had already been eclipsed by the fatal, apparently retaliatory stabbing of Yankel Rosenbaum, who was surrounded just hours after Cato's death by a crowd of black youths as he walked home from the subway. His killing was indistinguishable from that of Yusuf Hawkins by a white mob in Bensonhurst in 1989—though one wouldn't have known it at first from the press coverage of the event, which doted eerily on the demagogues' every word about the auto accident and about the grievances of young blacks hurling bottles, rocks, and anti-Semitic epithets at cops and at the supposedly privileged Chasidim. Allegedly, Lifsh's bad driving had compounded blacks' long-standing grievances because he was bringing up the rear of Lubavitcher Grand Rebbe Menachem Schneerson's police-escorted motorcade at the time.

The media soon recovered their balance; an exhaustive investigation by *Newsday* reporters Jennifer Preston and Michael Powell showed that Chasidim had not received disproportionate city aid for some years. Mayor David Dinkins, who had muted his criticisms of Sharpton and Carson in order to sit down and negotiate with them as the rocks and epithets flew, finally declared that Rosenbaum had been "lynched" as surely as Hawkins had been.

None of this stopped Sharpton, Carson, the Reverend Herbert Daughtry, and attorneys Moore, Maddox, and Mason, all veterans of past scams, from succoring the rioters. It didn't stop black *Amsterdam News* editor Wilbert Tatum, who had flamboyantly printed the name of the Central Park rape victim and characterized her assailants' trial as a lynching, from running headlines on the Crown Heights story such as "Many Blacks, No Jews Arrested." Nor did it stop the demagogues from turning Cato's August 26 funeral into a carnival of hatred so obscene that his bewildered, grieving parents were all but forgotten. "Rather than be scorned," wrote veteran activist Sam Pinn, the rock-throwing youths "should be recognized as freedom fighters.... The young people who are alleged to have murdered the rabbinical student Yankel Rosenbaum were striking a blow—not only a blow of revenge, but, in their view, a blow for justice." Cato family attorney and city-council candidate Colin Moore said the rock-throwing mob was "justifiably angry because Lifsh left the children to die." But, according to Police Commissioner Lee Brown, cops ordered a Jewish ambulance service to spirit Lifsh away because the crowd, instead of helping Lifsh lift the car off Gavin Cato and his injured sister Angela, stole Lifsh's watch, wallet, and car phone, and beat him (he received eighteen stitches at the hospital).

And yet, on Labor Day, the rioting and invective temporarily spent, decent opinion began to assert itself within the black community. Crown Heights hosted

"We say that building partnerships with the economically disadvantaged is more important than ever before."

Poverty continues to rob 13.5% of all Americans—33.6 million people—of decent education, employment, health care, and housing. Cynicism about countering the causes of poverty is rampant, while government aid to the disadvantaged is eroding.

Yet across the nation, in hundreds of communities, urban and rural, grassroots activists are carrying on the struggle to sustain and strengthen their communities. Just as our own families did when they arrived on these shores.

The Jewish Fund for Justice translates cherished Jewish values of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam* into the community activism of today. Since its founding in 1984, the Fund has awarded over $1 million to 162 grassroots groups—forging new partnerships between Jews and non-Jews.

The Jewish Fund for Justice is at work across the country.

. . . In Oakland, where JFJ's seed grant helped launch a new organization uniting 10 racial and ethnic groups to save their children from the twin health threats of lead poisoning and lack of immunization.

. . . In two Chicago neighborhoods—one African American and one racially mixed—where JFJ grants support residents mobilizing against drug trafficking and crime.

. . . In Brooklyn, where JFJ was the first Jewish institution to invest in a new community bank spurring economic development in some of New York City's poorest neighborhoods.

. . . In communities where no Jews reside, where JFJ grants assist migrant workers struggling for decent working and living conditions, farmers fighting to hold on to their land, and Native Americans transforming traditional sources of livelihood.

Some would contend, pointing to disturbing outbreaks of intergroup tensions, that we can't make a difference, that we should turn away from our historic commitment to universal social and economic justice. We say that building partnerships with the economically disadvantaged is more important than ever before.

Some of us participate in Jewish religious or communal life; some of us are not affiliated but strongly identify as Jews. But what brings us together as a people is a commitment to pursuing justice. Without that, we lose our sense of peoplehood.

A Public Commitment, A Shared Purpose.

The Jewish Fund for Justice

For more information, please contact: ■ In New York City: Jewish Fund for Justice, 920 Broadway, Ste. 605, NY, NY 10010, Tel: 212-677-7080 ■ In the Bay Area: Evan Mendelson, 324 Rutledge, San Francisco, CA 94110, Tel: 415-285-2102 ■ In the Chicago Area: Ronna Stamm, 1126 Michigan Ave., Evanston, IL 60202, Tel: 708-328-0182 ■ In metro Washington, D.C.: Judy Herr, 8012 Maple Ridge Rd., Bethesda, MD 20814, Tel: 301-656-9218 ■ In greater Boston: Alan Solomont, ADS Management, One High St., N. Andover, MA 01845, Tel: 508-689-3422 ■

more than a million Caribbean blacks in the annual West Indian Day Parade without incident; a chasidic spokesman even marched with Dinkins as a grand marshal in a gesture of reconciliation. Carson pronounced himself so disgusted that peace had broken out on the site of young Cato's demise that he was thinking of leaving town forever; "white" talk shows and newspapers were deluged with offers to pay his one-way fare to anywhere on the globe. Sharpton flew to Israel, where he stayed just long enough to leave a civil summons for the driver Lifsh, who had fled there after giving the grand jury his testimony. Senator D'Amato, meanwhile, came to Crown Heights to condemn Sharpton and declare that Dinkins, who was planning a trip to Africa for November, shouldn't bother to come back. Yet less than two weeks after the rioting stopped, Colin Moore and C. Vernon Mason were defeated in their own race for City Council seats by white incumbents who garnered more black votes than they did (albeit in contests where more than one black candidate was running).

Returns in another council election proved equally revealing. Crown Heights's own long-time councilwoman Mary Pinkett, a lackluster, union-friendly black politician of the sort that progressives find useful but uninspiring, spoke out for reconciliation and against demagoguery. She was overwhelmingly reelected, in an overwhelmingly black district, against a strong challenger, Pete Williams, a young black activist more congenial to practitioners of today's putatively progressive "identity politics." Williams, a staff member of the Medgar Evers College Center for Law and Social Justice, had assisted a council redistricting commission in drawing districts along racial lines, under cover of the Voting Rights Act. He proved sympathetic to the Crown Heights rioters and insensitive to a more pluralist understanding of the tragedy, which would never have rationalized Rosenbaum's killing as an acceptable expression of grievance. It is precisely people like Williams about whom progressives need to think twice; their confusion about the uses and abuses of racial identity widens the rifts we need to close.

Notwithstanding these electoral reversals for the demagogues, many Jews are enraged and appalled that virtually no "responsible" black leaders, except Dinkins, Councilwoman Pinkett, and the New York Civil Rights Coalition's Michael Meyers, publicly deplored the Crown Heights spectacle, let alone faced down the demagogues. Equally appalling was the silence or barely audible response of such liberal Jewish politicians as City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman, State Attorney General Robert Abrams, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, and most mainstream Jewish organizations. Angered by this default, even some liberal Jews are succumbing to the stirrings of a tribal militancy. Yet for all their anguish and rage, Jews have emerged from the crisis not more isolated but closer to other communities: feminists already embittered by the black activists' treatment of the Central Park jogger; Asians infuriated by their anti-Asian rhetoric and lies in the Korean boycott; and Hispanics angered over city-council redistricting that, they feel, was a power grab by blacks to facilitate the candidacies of Mason and Moore. If there is any coalition aborning in New York today, it is one against blacks.

If such a new coalition could transcend its members' parochial grievances and take itself seriously enough to hammer out a public, civic consensus that condemns demagoguery from any source, it would deserve to win some victories. Black leaders who have accommodated the demagogues would have no one to blame but themselves—not white racist conspirators, not economic royalists, not George Bush's abdication of federal responsibility for cities and the poor. To repeat, it is precisely because racism, economic injustice, and Republican irresponsibility are so virulent that black protest leaders, backs to the wall, cannot afford to alienate potential allies with the self-indulgent, bunker-like, conspiratorial mentality they have displayed in Crown Heights and earlier cases. And it is precisely because they chose that course that they must be fought, not on behalf of a countervailing Jewish or Korean nationalism but on behalf of progressive values and civic justice. Either that, or we will descend into Beirut.

Why have so many black leaders taken their followers over a precipice—or stood by, watching the disaster unfold without finding heart and voice to warn of it? Why hasn't the cynical strategy of manipulating the criminal-justice system with false charges exhausted itself? Time after time, multiracial juries have rebuffed the scenarios of race hatred. Time after time, ordinary blacks, working in neighborhood organizations and churches, cooperating with whites in schools, political groups, and workplaces, quietly put such scenarios aside. The demagogues never do well in the polls, though there is some troubling evidence that belief in conspiracy theories is rising. What, then, drives these self-destructive beliefs and tactics forward?

One obvious answer is that the black community has a long, undeniable, often irresistible tradition of rhetoric divorced from responsibility. It's not hard to understand why. Under slavery and Jim Crow, and, indeed, until the 1950s, when Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., James Baldwin, and Martin Luther King, Jr., began to write and speak politically in ways that truly got under the skins of

whites, black political rhetoric tended (with some notable exceptions, such as W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Frederick Douglass) to be flamboyant precisely because the words were weightless, of no consequence, unable to move the walls of white ignorance and indifference. For all the difference Powell, Baldwin, King, and their successors have made, the older tradition echoes even in Jesse Jackson's claim to be a "tree shaker, not a jelly maker."

It echoes, too, in a recent statement by the Reverend Calvin Butts, senior pastor of Powell's old Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, that he "can understand" Leonard Jeffries's claim that Jews and the Mafia conspired against blacks in Hollywood. "Can understand"? No one expects Butts to be a historian; still, a leader owes his listeners something better than a sly, polemical appropriation of wild charges. It is as if Butts (who campaigned in the streets for C. Vernon Mason in the council races) and Jackson were saying: It is our duty to evoke and provoke; it is somebody else's duty—the real grown-ups?—to determine the truth and set matters to rights. We will spin our pain into webs of narrative and metaphor. Someone else, always someone else, will turn them into politics and policy.

Economic desperation, ignorance, and profound marginalization may also explain why some people do not assume responsibility. But blacks in the Jim Crow South showed the world that even poor, uneducated, and marginalized people can shoulder great burdens, and some of this country's greatest black leaders have arisen amid conditions far more dire than those that obtain today. These explanations are inexcusable, in any case, in those who call themselves leaders. Calvin Butts is not desperate; nor are City College president Bernard Harleston and New York NAACP chief Hazel Dukes; nor is Percy Sutton, multimillionaire owner of WLIB; nor are Wilbert Tatum of the *Amsterdam News* and Andrew Cooper, publisher of the city's other black weekly newspaper, *The City Sun,* which also parrots the demagogues' lies. Even Sharpton, Daughtry, and Jeffries are not under siege, except by conscious choice; these three leave New York City's ghettos every evening for their homes across the Hudson in suburban Teaneck, New Jersey. They have the room and hence the responsibility to rethink their strategies.

A deeper answer to the question of why they don't was offered in September in a compelling *New York* magazine article about events in Crown Heights. Joe Klein described the use of Gavin Cato—like Brawley before him—as a figure in "black martyrology," a system that misappropriates current events to dramatize historic truths about racism. That may mean, as we have seen again and again, altering the facts and slandering innocent whites: Howard Beach motorist Dominick Blum became in the rhetoric of black protest a racist accomplice of Michael Griffiths's assailants, even though he was a young amateur actor who'd played in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun;* and Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Steven Pagones was publicly accused by Sharpton and Mason of raping Tawana Brawley.

This is a theme I explore at some length in *The Closest of Strangers.* Brawley's account of her violation by white authorities, for example, brought to the surface an archetype, seared into black memory, of the most intimate, passional sort of exploitation—the illicit, coerced master-slave liaisons of the Old South. Even the discovery that Brawley's own story was a hoax became a justification, in the minds of Sharpton and company, for another ancient script: For centuries, whites had falsely accused blacks of raping white women. Now, the tables would be turned; whites, too, would taste victimization by lie, and this seemed to give any number of otherwise intelligent people a certain satisfaction. Recall, too, the black and Latino youths who, having raped and bludgeoned the Central Park jogger, became, in the minds of editor Tatum and other black leaders, the victims of a "lynching," like the Scottsboro Boys.

It should not surprise Jews that the historic hurts of racial and ethnic groups are released periodically from communal amnesia by the grindings and proddings of current events. These traumas rise to the surface of group consciousness, demanding to be interpreted and reworked—much as the hurts individuals carry within them from childhood surface, sometimes unpredictably, for renegotiation. The 1963 trial of Adolf Eichmann, for example, unleashed a torrent of emotions that many Jews had repressed immediately after the Holocaust and kept down for nearly twenty years.

But because Eichmann was actually guilty, because he was tried by institutions that Jews had constructed in the real world according to essential and universal principles of justice, his trial did not pervert and dehumanize his accusers. Black interpretations of the Brawley, Central Park, and other cases, too, reflect a community's intense need to renegotiate historic hurts of monstrous proportions. But, in the hands of Sharpton and his ilk, they have come to resemble a neurotic individual's reenactments of old grievances using the wrong targets. Such behavior brings only fitful, temporary release; one is condemned to repeat it, again and again.

There are, of course, mythically unsatisfying but practical ways to reduce racism in the criminal-justice system and in society at large. One is to apply a community's

electoral muscle, in concert with other communities that share at least some common goals, to elect judges and district attorneys who feel a political as well as moral obligation to racism's victims. This strategy has already elected people such as Brooklyn D.A. Charles J. Hynes, who won in 1989 with a strong black vote due to his success as a special state prosecutor in Queens in convicting the Howard Beach assailants in 1986. And there are ways other than Sharpton's to organize public protests; there can be demonstrations that embarrass whites into decency by embracing them in the process of confronting them, as the civil-rights movement did so brilliantly in the South in the 1960s.

Doing that means assuming a public responsibility that transcends tribal memories and myth-making agendas. It means rising above a neurotic attachment to victimhood in order to display a disarming magnanimity and to affirm universal principles of human dignity. It means, in short, having a larger vision. Just as some Jews, whose goodwill has been curdled and deformed by the horror of the Holocaust, are incapable of sustaining that vision, preferring instead to find genocidal anti-Semitism in every untoward encounter, black demagogues and the writers and politicians who indulge them are incapable of practicing a serious, healing politics of justice. Their intimations of a common human enterprise are blocked by their pain, which they embroider endlessly, almost lovingly. Every trial that they cast in black and white against all the evidence becomes a psychodramatic reenactment of that pain, not a constructive reworking of it tied to real-world consequences and rewards. In Crown Heights, black protest leaders turned on D.A. Hynes, even after he took the unusual, propitiatory step of impaneling a grand jury to investigate whether there were any grounds for indicting driver Lifsh. After the grand jury concluded there were no grounds, Hynes was vilified for his trouble.

As long as protest leaders lie about evidence while prosecutors and juries stick to the truth, demagoguery will continue to be rebuffed. But in the minds of these charlatan leaders and their followers, the rebuffs only confirm the existence of a racist cover-up. Perversely, that warms them and gratifies them because they find it more satisfying to hurt than to hope. They anticipate pain, savor it, eroticize it, historicize it, and project it onto situations where it is inappropriate. This confirms the old, familiar inner coordinates of the demagogues and their adherents. It gives them marching orders, the sheen of embattled heroism. It spares them disorientation, risk, and the fear of the unknown, which come with hoping and with reaching out. People trapped this way cannot lead movements for racial justice, only movements for revenge.

Jews, too, have had demagogues, such as Meir Kahane, who elaborate and embellish visions of endless embattlement and pain. But, seductive though their appeals can be in moments of genuine communal peril, we have, in America, at least, found the security and psychic freedom to hold them at arm's length. The Jewish community made City College professor Michael Levin a pariah after his ideas about black inferiority were publicized; unlike his colleague Jeffries, with whom he is often compared, Levin was not followed around by adoring throngs of Jewish students or deluged with speaking invitations. Only journalists seeking to "balance" their stories about Jeffries call him. Otherwise, his phone never rings.

For reasons at once obvious and profound, the black community in America is far less secure, its psychic margin of freedom much narrower. America is, historically and even now, the locus of blacks' violation, the land of their enslavement and humiliation. Without question, our society's endemic racism continues to subject countless blacks to relentless psychic assault. What is appalling and tragic about the New York black community's need for martyrological narratives and fantasies of revenge is that it has become so intense, so unrelieved, that it silences even those blacks who clearly see the political and cultural costs. If identity politics offers a way out of this trap, let its defenders show us the way.

The genocidal brutalities that went into the building of the United States are roughly on a par with those of every other civilization in human history. What is unusual and potentially redemptive about America is that, as a self-conscious and deliberate human creation, it is the first truly multiracial civilization since ancient Rome to nourish the seeds of its own transcendence. People of all colors, believing this, have watered those seeds with their blood, sweat, and tears to make them grow, again and again. When the otherwise disappointing Mario Cuomo says, "We are the sons and daughters of giants," that is what he is talking about.

Identity politics is a fantasy for smaller people. It fears the cold truth that humans and their institutions emerge only slowly from the primordial slime. It prattles on about the fact that Thomas Jefferson held slaves and never gave the rights of women a thought when he wrote the Declaration of Independence, instead of taking what he wrote as a uniquely precious text awaiting interpretation and fulfillment, as many ordinary women and people of color have done with great courage. We can recite the inanities and inhumanities of white, patriarchal oppression, or we can be brave enough

(Continued on p. 92)

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

Since the collapse of the New Left, progressive politics has increasingly been organized around a series of political identities. Women, African-Americans, Chicanos, gays, and lesbians have all insisted that the struggle against the oppression that they experienced through their identities was becoming the central element defining their political worldview. Tikkun *itself, though it addresses issues facing the entire society and culture, nevertheless proudly puts itself forward as a Jewish critique of politics, culture, and society. In this special section, we feature an attack on identity politics from Ilene Philipson and then a series of responses that take up the political and cultural meaning of rooting oneself in one's particular identity.*

What's the Big I.D.? The Politics of the Authentic Self

Ilene Philipson

The current raging debate in the mass media about "political correctness" (PC) has shown astonishingly little interest in the origins of PC and the meaning it has to its adherents. Alarmist critics focus instead on New Leftists who now occupy positions of authority in the university that allow them to fashion a political agenda out of their sixties-era radicalism. Presumably, these now-powerful political hacks have opened the floodgates through affirmative-action admissions policies, and the university is now inundated with students of different races, ethnicities, and sexual identities demanding curricula that reflect their idiosyncratic experiences.

This kind of argument focuses on the effects of PC rather than on its causes. But it is impossible to adequately assess political correctness without understanding its evolution. PC is rooted in a politics of identity that has come to dominate political protest, progressive or left-of-center discourse and criticism, and the way people of all political stripes view their place in the American political landscape and society in general. At the foundation of identity politics is a fundamental belief in the necessity of expressing an identifiable "authentic self," and this belief increasingly has become the means through which individuals interpret their own experience and give it social expression.

Identity politics typically is assumed to result naturally from a "multicultural" society. According to the proponents of a politics of identity, individuals in such a heterogeneous society have different experiences that are ignored by a white, male, Protestant ruling class. Therefore, the fundamental agenda of a politics of identity seeks respect for social diversity, greater inclusion, and representation. Implied in this outlook is the assumption that if all identities were truly recognized as valid and fully represented politically, there would be little basis from which to launch sustained criticism of our political system. As more diverse groups are brought into the mainstream—gaining fuller representation in everything from advertising to legislative bodies—the ideology of American meritocracy would stand confirmed.

Taking up the issue in this broader outline, we can see grounds to question both the idea that identity politics is an inevitable outgrowth of multiculturalism and the adequacy of its implicit political goals.

Identity politics claims that individuals chiefly define themselves to society through the frame of a socially recognizable identity. According to many of its proponents, such identity is seen as immutable, discrete, and clearly delineated. The boundaries of identity set the ingroup apart from the rest of society, therefore making their determination a critical, if not *the* critical ingredient in defining identity: Are people who are half black and who can "pass" as white to be included in the identity defined as African-American? Are bisexuals to be included with gay and lesbian groupings? Are Jews who display Christmas trees and ignore Jewish holidays to be included as Jews?

Questions of inclusion and exclusion are paramount because identity politics presumes that any identity must communicate to other groupings, the state, and the society in general as a clearly demarcated group. Once included, an individual speaks always through his or her identity. Until recently, it was primarily the

Ilene Philipson teaches sociology at UC Berkeley, is a contributing editor of Tikkun, *and coeditor (with Karen Hansen) of* Women, Class and the Feminist Imagination *(Temple University Press, 1990).*

political Left that posited one's identity as the key determinant of one's opportunities to engage in political expression; now, however, this premise is a property of the entire political spectrum, arbitrating everything from Supreme Court nominations to academic appointments. Indeed, the impulse to mediate social experience through identity has become so routine, such a hegemonic part of our experience, that it is difficult to remember that this was not always the case.

The legacy of the discovery of the authentic self has been the negation of any political movement that seeks to move very far beyond the self and its most immediate political concerns.

Prior to the 1950s, however, identity, particularly in political terms, was not a salient category of thought. In the post–World War II period, the wide-ranging influence of classical psychoanalytic theory posited a uniformity of experience based in drive theory. Its adherents viewed human beings as bundles of drives and complexes that were universally experienced. People varied only in quantitative terms—one person had a lesser ability to repress, another a stronger sex drive. While this view was certainly salient in both academia and clinical work, it affected much of middle-class culture in general, as even a casual glance at virtually any magazine of the time attests.

The child-rearing literature of the day bears further witness to the presumed uniformity of experience that characterized the culture of the 1950s. Benjamin Spock, author of the period's foremost child-rearing guide, founded his work in psychoanalytic assumptions and posited a commonality of experience for all families based on white, suburban, middle-class ideals. While child-rearing literature has always betrayed a white, middle-class bias, Spock's work represents the apotheosis of conformity, "getting along," and looking to peers as the source of values and norms. What was ethnic, "old-fashioned," religious, economically disadvantaged, idiosyncratic, and outside the norm or unacceptable to the peer group was discounted. Parents, Spock counseled, were their children's "pals," who should go no further than to "tactfully guide the child if he is willing to be guided." Authority was to be invested in the peer group rather than in such "pals." Culturally transmitted values and norms of behavior were supposed to take a back seat to the values of the peer group—values that were doubtlessly more in line with the cultural agendas of the schoolroom and mass media.

Identity was seen in uniformly and expressly "American" terms. After World War II, the U.S. had emerged as the major global superpower, and had embarked upon a period of economic abundance unprecedented in the nation's history. This triumph in part helped consolidate a homogeneous American identity that was constantly counterposed to its polar opposite—communism. A diffusely defined "American way of life"—profit-driven, individualistic, moderately religious, ensconced in isolated nuclear families, rigidly segregated according to sex and race, consumerist, and politically acquiescent—was to be defended in areas around the globe and within the U.S. against the agents of the Soviets, Chinese, and Cubans, who threatened to transform "us" into conformist, God-hating, masculinized female and feminized male automatons.

The United States of the postwar era was in fact a nation built on the ideology of sameness—despite continual attempts of many of the period's opinion-makers to equate uniformity with communism and individuality with "Americanism." Urban ethnic enclaves were dispersed through the process of suburbanization, and the American way of life was broadcast in never-before-seen detail with the advent of television. Community, regionalism, and subculture seemed to be on their way to extinction, melted away into the pot of a conformist national identity.

Out of dissatisfaction with these growing incursions upon difference and diversity, the idea of an authentic self took hold. Founded upon the belief that every individual contains at the very core of his or her being a unique, irreducible self, authenticity mandated no higher aim than self-knowledge. Americans—especially younger Americans—began to ask whether the purpose of life might be more than filling a function or enacting a role in the social order. One did not have to settle for the everyday unhappiness that Freud offered up as the outcome of resolving neurotic conflict. Instead, the search for unrealized potential and self-expression could be the most exciting and challenging aim an individual could pursue. As Marshall Berman, one of the most eloquent writers on authenticity, has observed: "Any adequate notion of freedom would have to include the individual's power to experience, to change and to grow in pursuit of his greatest happiness: in other words, the freedom *to be himself*" (emphasis in the original). The ethos of personal liberation, "doing your own thing," "getting yourself together," challenged the uniformity of society and the massification of culture. In

Berman's words, the "search for authenticity ... begins with an insistence that the social and political structures men live in are keeping the self stifled, chained down, locked up." The authentic self remained buried, hidden but necessarily outside of any social or psychological determinism. Its discovery promised the realization of imagination, creativity, autonomy, growth, fulfillment—in other words, liberation.

The attraction to the idea of an authentic self did not result from a social acceptance or even awareness of diversity, but came in response to the widespread cultural denial that diversity mattered. A belief that each individual carried within him or her a self that could not be fully apprehended, socially contained, and subsumed—that self-knowledge and acceptance were more important than conformity to ideals, roles, and standards originating outside the self—served as a way out of the gray flannel straitjacket of the postwar period.

In the face of an ideology of conformity, the social upheavals of suburbanization, the hegemony of television, and anticommunism, the assertion of an authentic self was a radical notion. As such, it defied those social institutions that stood in the way of its discovery and expression: the family, religion, drive-centered psychology, mass media, and the state. At the heart of the social movements of the 1960s was the conviction that the "establishment" did not understand people's histories and experiences, did not recognize difference, and failed to adequately represent different forms of selfhood in everything from beauty pageants to legislative bodies of government. The demand for recognition, the cry to be noticed, for individual experience to matter, infused racial politics, the women's and gay movements, as well as the human-potential movement and the counterculture.

The quickness with which these movements were able to capture adherents and ignite people's imaginations spoke to the profound alienation that dominated postwar America. The language of the authentic self spoke to a pervasive sense that personal, familial, and cultural histories were being obliterated, that the tightly knit communities where people were known for their unique characteristics had given way to the anonymity of tract housing and suburban shopping malls. In response to the demise of actual, physical community, an ideological community based on the commonality of authentic selves became a toehold, a way to challenge a faceless "establishment" that sought to pave over individual difference in order to cement an American identity.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, the form of political discourse that promoted the authentic self coexisted along with the antiwar movement, a movement that could unify all the authentic selves within its compass while recognizing their uniqueness. Political protest based in a demand for the social recognition of different identities and the demand for an end to the Vietnam War is what constituted the New Left.

The end of the Vietnam War, however, removed the unifying issue that had held together all the groupings of authentic selves on the Left. In its absence, leftists of all stripes attempted to find some adhesive—the nuclear-freeze movement, environmentalism, the movement against intervention in Central America, the repeated calls for "coalition" politics that would simply bind together "new social movements" into some unspecified, latter-day united front. But nothing took. It has turned out that the legacy of the discovery of the authentic self has been the negation of any political movement that seeks to move very far beyond the self and its most immediate political concerns.

What remains of the Left in this country is by now largely the province of identity politics. As a result, the Left community has splintered into an endless number of identities seeking recognition and representation. At its best, the politics of identity can be viewed as promoting a potential coalition that could come together in support of a Democratic candidate or in opposition to some common opponent. At its worst, it represents competing interest groups seeking their own share of the pie.

Identity politics draws much of its power from its ability to provide a language that speaks to people's profound sense of alienation from society, while simultaneously absolving them of self-blame. In a country that venerates the self-made man (and nominates him to the Supreme Court), and often defines achievement as the transcendence of one's personal and cultural history, the failure to succeed is perceived most typically as individual failure. Identity politics provides an understanding for that failure in political terms. It allows individuals to understand that they are not succeeding because of their race, sexual orientation, gender—that is to say, factors they cannot change and did not choose, and that are not fully recognized or rewarded in this society.

This function of identity politics explains some of the appeal it has for students on campuses today. Due to vigorous minority-recruitment policies in the last decade, many student populations now present a new sort of psychological and social challenge to incoming students. Having to compete for grades, loans, scholarships, and acceptance in close quarters with students of divergent racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, as well as sexual and political preferences that may seem unfamiliar and/or threatening, can be extremely alienating if

not emotionally unsettling. And for those facing such challenges at a time of economic retrenchment and shrinking resources, when the ability to finance a college education and find a job upon graduation is becoming more and more uncertain, the anxieties and insecurities that are often a normal part of going to college can be filtered through identity politics. Embracing a clearly distinguished and recognized identity can serve as an emotional oasis, a way to assuage one's sense of alienation. If a student is feeling inadequate or afraid, the ready-made explanation that such feelings emanate from the political exclusion of his or her identity grouping can be a welcome means of resisting self-blame. If a student is having academic difficulties, the bias of the prevailing canon can be challenged rather than the abilities of the student. If a student is feeling socially isolated or inept, the racism, homophobia, or political incorrectness of the administration or other students can be seen as the source. Far more than merely providing college students with a peer group or means of social identification, identity politics furnishes a way of negotiating what seems to be an increasingly competitive and alienating experience within the university.

It may also be the case that identity politics speaks to feelings of powerlessness to change the larger society. In the 1960s and early 1970s, most New Leftists maintained a tremendous sense of personal efficacy and a firm belief that they could alter the power structure, even change the world. As far as identity politics existed—in the black, women's, and nascent gay movements—its adherents professed a corresponding belief that empowering these oppressed groups would actually be a means of transforming American society as a whole. Feminist writer Deirdre English recently wrote that in the early 1970s

> I remember being excited by the statement "feminism includes socialism." It meant that feminism alone projected such sweeping and utopian changes that it could socialize the economy as well as revolutionize private relations, the family, and, of course, the Left itself.

This radical vision is now exhausted, and many New Leftists and subsequent cohorts of progressives have adopted a narrower worldview. In the absence of the kind of community that linked people together in the civil-rights and antiwar movements, and in the counterculture, people have turned toward varying political identities that offer some compelling community identification: a shared history, a coherent body of ideals and values, a renewed sense of belonging and roots. The turn toward a Jewish identity represents one such narrowing of vision. Increasing numbers of progressive Jews have focused their attention on Jewish issues: founding progressive synagogues, Jewish publications, theater groups; and funding organizations for Israel, Jewish political organizations, film festivals, and educational programs. Israel and the political upheavals in the Middle East often are the sole political interests informing such projects. And when these progressive Jews examine, critique, or protest other international and national issues, it is always through the filter of being Jewish, being politically progressive *as a Jew.* For younger generations of people who have turned to identity politics as a means of grappling with the injustices of our society, the idea of challenging the power structure in toto appears at best idealistic, at worst farcical. In a society where mere economic survival has become more and more precarious, where a steady stream of new immigrants and newly constructed identities demand recognition and a share of power, holding on to some politically defined identity may be an act of survival, comfort, and a means of negotiating one's way through a world that seems more out of control and unmanageable than it did even at the height of the Vietnam War.

Identity politics, then, is not some natural outgrowth of "multiculturalism," an inevitable feature of political life in a pluralist society. Rather, it represents a means of resisting the forces of a mass culture, a cemented-over, suburban landscape, and a seemingly unreachable, unalterable political structure. Similarly it has allowed people marginalized within larger political groupings, such as the New Left, to find a political voice—as when women have spoken out against men in the civil-rights and antiwar movements for failing to recognize them as full participants, or when anti-Semitism on the Left has been condemned by progressive Jews. Identity politics provides a way of avoiding self-blame for feelings of powerlessness and anomie that are, at their root, politically and socially constructed. But as such, the politics of identity inevitably misdirects our attention away from the fact that, apart from a tiny group at the top of the class hierarchy (to use a forgotten term), alienation, a sense of not being recognized for who one is, and feelings of impotence and failure affect us all—certainly to different degrees and with different repercussions. But to base our political vision on difference, on what constitutes the boundaries between us, shields us, I believe, from both the recognition of what we share in common and the ultimate source of our distress.

In short, identity politics is not sufficiently radical to speak to this distress, to get at the root sources of our alienation and individually experienced lack of social recognition. Insofar as such a political outlook compels people to seek inclusion in a political system that itself

remains unchallenged, it perpetuates the belief that we live in an essentially fair and just society that simply needs to expand its scope of recognition and representation rather than transform it.

While the limits of identity politics are real enough, what might serve as a realistic alternative seems indistinct. Certainly any universalistic, totalizing theory of political change that does not respect difference and diversity in people's histories and experience is no longer viable in the 1990s. Yet it is critical to be able to transcend the particularistic, to find common ground, to recognize there are no boundaries dividing us that are not socially constructed and therefore amenable to change.

For the moment, it seems that we live in a political landscape inhabited by an endless array of identity groupings, fellowships of authentic selves yearning for recognition. The danger of promoting narrow self-interest in this political landscape remains high, for identity politics can easily give way to the politics of special interests that seek nothing more than a larger piece of the pie. Worse still, identity politics can degenerate into asserting the superiority of one identity over another on the basis of greater suffering or oppression, as the recent debacle in Crown Heights attests. Any credible approach to the politics of identity thus needs to seek out a dynamic tension between the advocacy of any particular identity and the promotion of a larger social vision that acknowledges the needs and pain that color the experience of us all.

Through the lens of Jewish identity, *Tikkun* attempts to capture this larger vision. As a secular Jew, I often find myself looking for more about contemporary social conditions in its pages and less about the value of Jewish scripture. Yet *Tikkun* seems consistently to sustain the tension between the particular and the universal, the world of Jews and the world occupied by Jews and non-Jews. Certainly to settle for this, to make the publication of a Jewish magazine—no matter how universalist its orientation—serve as our greatest political achievement, is shortsighted. Inasmuch as any publication can educate, excite, and instigate political activity, its role is invaluable. But *Tikkun* is not a political movement, and at present doesn't offer us a way out of the conundrum of identity politics.

To move beyond a politics of identity without losing the rootedness in the particular that such a politics promotes is the overwhelming task facing contemporary progressive thinkers. For to believe that the journey inward toward the discovery of the authentic self is our primary political task, or to hold that articulating our differences is the most to which we can aspire, will only doom progressives in this country to be further marginalized from public debate. This, in turn, will continue to confirm the belief that we are powerless to affect anything beyond the community we inhabit with others who share our political identity. □

Responses

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: Multicultural Madness

When I first read Ilene Philipson's essay on identity politics, I admit I was taken aback. All this time, I thought the clamor over the curriculum reflected something deep about the cultural politics of this country in an age of changing demographics. I thought it was an attempt to retrieve those voices that had long been excluded from our "official" culture—or something like that. But, as it turns out, I'd been ignoring the crucial psychological dimension of the contretemps. As Dr. Philipson wrote, "embracing a clearly distinguished and recognized identity can serve as an emotional oasis, a way to assuage one's sense of alienation. If a student is feeling inadequate or afraid, the ready-made explanation that such feelings emanate from the political exclusion of his or her identity grouping can be a welcome means of resisting self-blame."

Only then did I realize that I'd been barking up the wrong tree. The real problem was not racism, sexism, or homophobia; it was feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, alienation. Identity politics was just a crutch. Dr. Philipson made me see that *a psychological problem demands a psychological solution*. What is really needed is not reform, but psychotherapy. Throw in a dose of

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is coeditor of Transition, *an international review.*

Prozac for good measure, and say good-bye to multicultural madness.

As for me, well, I was afraid it might be too late: I mean, I was completely out of control—revising the curriculum, editing anthologies of Afro-American literature, writing essays on Frederick Douglass and Zora Neale Hurston … even digging around for lost nineteenth-century books by black women. In short, I had hit bottom.

You have to start by admitting you have a problem. Dr. Philipson helped me see that. And so I went to my first meeting of Multiculturalists Anonymous, an experience I'll never forget. "My name is Henry Louis Gates, Jr.," I told the group in a small, quavering voice, "and I'm a multiculturalist."

That was the first step; but it was only the first step. One day at a time is the MA creed. However, since I was a pretty advanced case, Dr. Philipson recognized that intensive psychotherapy was indicated, and she agreed, for the sake of science, to take on the case. What follow are my diary entries on our sessions, which I offer so that they may give hope and solace to other multiculturalists who haven't yet embarked on the twelve-step program for recovery.

SESSION #1. Dr. Philipson tells me that I have to get over the notion of the authentic self. Naturally I'm indignant. I went to Yale, after all. Doesn't she know that in the much-decried "PC academy" authenticity is strictly démodé? Selves are seen as fragmented and multiplicitous. Identities are not stable attributes but labile sites of contestation and negotiation. The way we usually theorize it in the humanities, I tell her, politics is no longer the expression of such preconstituted identities. On the contrary, the construction and articulation of such identities is seen as itself a political act. I cite all the trendiest literary, social, and political theorists—Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, Renato Rosaldo, Jean-Loup Amselle, bell hooks, Teresa De Lauretis, and on and on and on. "Positionality" is a current buzzword for discussing social identities, but real selves have definitely been consigned to the ash heap of history. Dr. Philipson isn't impressed. She says I'm resisting. Don't tell me you honestly think of yourself as a discursive smear, she says. I admit I don't. And are you saying that this trendy anti-essentialism vanquished the opposition once and for all? Again, I have to admit she has a point. There are plenty of self-styled "Afrocentrists" who remain wedded to a transhistorical notion of blackness. It's true that they're mostly to be found on the grass-roots level, but a few of them are on campus, sure. And yes, I admit, certain informal notions of cultural authenticity have been quite resistant to the inroads of "theory." But, I protest, I'm clean. I've always decried narrow ethnic insiderism and parochialism. She says I protest too much.

Still, I wonder if something else isn't going on here. We've moved away from the naive view that our "selves" are stifled by the constraints of society, and now recognize that such "constraints" are also what enable, indeed, constitute, our agency. But it's easy to slip—as I think Philip Rieff, for example, is inclined to—from this unexceptionable insight to a general distrust of liberalism and social change.

Dr. Philipson says my time's up.

SESSION #2. Dr. Philipson says she's decided I haven't really come to grips with the nature of identity politics, which she says is a recent development. Prior to the 1950s, she says, identity wasn't a salient category of political thought. Whoa, I tell her: Identity politics is as old as politics. As long as human beings form communities that have an important claim on our loyalties, and as long as politics is about the allocation of resources, group identity is going to play a major political role. In fact, the notion of universal man only gained currency in the Enlightenment. When, in 1790, the French National Assembly finally decided to extend citizenship to France's Jewish subjects, the deal was predicated on "de-Judaizing the Jew." (I'd been reading Michael Burns and Arthur Hertzberg on the subject.) If the Ashkenazim would only give up their "judesco-hebraico-rabbinical jargon," if they would only shed those "humiliating signs which designate them as Jews" and come to resemble "our fellow citizens," the compact would be upheld; if not, they were to be expelled. (When Sartre wrote, in his 1948 essay *Anti-Semite and Jew,* that "the authentic Jew abandons the myth of the universal man," he was explicitly writing against a still-regnant Enlightenment tradition.) In the case of America, it's hard to make sense of the founding charters of many of the original colonies without a notion of identity politics. How can you understand the notion of the "balanced ticket" in the nineteenth century without the category of identity politics? and on and on. *Everyone* does it, I say, thrashing around on her tufted leather couch, flustered by her glacial silence. Why stick it to the "campus activists"?

Dr. Philipson isn't impressed. She says I'm projecting.

SESSION #3. Dr. Philipson says we have to face facts. Once, the ideal of the "melting pot" reigned, but now our differences, not our commonalities, are stressed. She asks me how I feel about this.

Conflicted, I admit. But (I continue) people have always felt conflicted on the subject. The notion of the

"melting pot" was challenged from the very beginning; it was never an uncontested ideal. I mean, even in the Israel Zangwill play that popularized the term, the hero muses that "Those who love us must suffer, and we must suffer in their suffering. It is live things, not dead metals, that are being melted in the Crucible." I go on to cite the eloquent essays published by Randolph Bourne ("The Jew and Transnational America") and Horace Kallen ("Democracy *versus* the Melting Pot") around World War I. In fact, I say, it's hard to pinpoint what's new about the new multiculturalism. Waxing eloquent, I quote John Dewey on pluralism, which he described as the greatest philosophical idea of our time: "How are we going to make the most of the new values we set on variety, difference, and individuality—how are we going to realize their possibilities in every field and at the same time not sacrifice that plurality to the cooperation we need so much?"

Dr. Philipson looks quizzical. So you admit, she says, that an emphasis on commonality as well as difference is important. Absolutely, I say. I believe in civic humanism, I tell her; but then, so do most cultural pluralists I know. Pluralism isn't supposed to be about policing the boundaries, I insist; it's supposed to be about breaking them down, acknowledging the fluid and interactive nature of all identities.

Dr. Philipson says something about delusional structures. Apparently electroconvulsive therapy may be indicated. She says that one can't understand the current ascendancy of identity politics without examining the past. She asks if my parents read Dr. Spock's baby book. I suppose they did. But wait a minute, I say. Shouldn't we be talking about the impact of the two world wars on our thinking about race and nationality in this country, shouldn't we be talking about the effects of the women's movement and the civil-rights movement on the rhetoric of empowerment? In fact, I ask, how can we take seriously an analysis that omits these telling factors? Early training always tells, says Dr. Philipson.

What about the recent debates over the curriculum? I ask. "If a student is having academic difficulties," she says, "the bias of the prevailing canon can be challenged rather than the abilities of the student." OK, I say, but it isn't as if Aphra Behn is any easier to read than Beaumont and Fletcher; Zora Neale Hurston isn't any easier than F. Scott Fitzgerald. So the strategy doesn't make a lot of sense. Besides, it's a perspective that trivializes the basic issues. Literary feminism, bolstered by a lot of heavy-duty historical scholarship, was the single greatest impetus behind recent shifts in the so-called canon. We're talking about accomplished, ambitious scholars, not floundering undergraduates trying to sneak by. Details, she says. Details.

Session #4. This time I think I have her. I'm a little bothered by the level of abstraction of your argument, I tell her. So-called "identity politics" often does work through coalitions. It's popular to assail the failings of the major civil-rights lobbies, but we'd be a lot worse off without them. And more narrowly focused interest groups (like ACT UP) can sometimes be more effective than more mainstream, diffused organizations. In any case, why should one always subsume one's interests under the so-called "larger" issues ... or, more to the point, who determines which issues are "larger" anyway? The old-style Left vanguard would say: Never mind about racism, sexism, homophobia, because after the revolution, we'll take care of these things. I hope nobody was holding their breath.

And another thing. Why must the role of communities entail a "narrowing" of vision? As I recall, the authors of *Habits of the Heart* pretty much viewed such commitments—"communities of memory"—as our salvation in a country atomized by egoism and individualism. Even if you think they go too far, you might accept that the truth is somewhere in between.

Look, I tell her, I understand the concern about fragmentation. But identities are importantly different; nor is there an easy interchange between forms of oppression. By contrast, your general perspective assumes something like the fungibility of oppression: You know, parts is parts. It's like the story told of the old movie mogul who bought film rights to Radclyffe Hall's best-selling novel *The Well of Loneliness* back in the 1930s. You can't base a movie on that novel, his assistant protests—it's about lesbians! So, we'll change it, the mogul replies nonchalantly: We'll make it about ... aborigines.

Session #5. A glimmer of light. Dr. Philipson says that we need to move beyond identity politics without losing the rootedness in the particular. Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? I reply. Because, she says, you wouldn't have believed me. She sounds just like Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. The thing is, I tell her, that sounds kind of like what I want, too. She looks skeptical, but it's true. As I say, pluralism is meant to question cultural absolutism, not multiply it; we didn't just favor the triumph of one parochialism as a "transcultural" value. So how come I'm the one with the disease? I ask. She says something soothing about the distinction between analyst and analysand.

I bring up Ortega y Gasset's line that "it is the mission of history to make our fellow beings acceptable to us." Of course, there's more than one way to skin a cat. But she says that identity politics is conservative: It cares only about greater representation in the exercise

of power, it has nothing to say about social transformation. I say that sounds like "After the revolution ..." to me. She shakes her head: I didn't say that. Well, I say, do you have any ideas? Because, I confess, I'm kind of down on grand unified theories of emancipation myself—don't see that we need them.

You're intellectualizing, she says. And we still haven't addressed those underlying feelings of anxiety, depression, impotence, and inadequacy. Well, what can I say? I mean, she *is* the doctor.

SESSION #6. She's wearing my defenses down. I mean, what do I really know? I'd always assumed that multiculturalism wasn't something to take a position on, that it was just a fact of life in this country, as in most others. But maybe that's vanity. Maybe we ought to check our social identities at the door. But what does that leave us? Bodiless vapor trails of sentience, like on that "Star Trek" episode? Don't knock it if you haven't tried it, she says. I reflect on the fact that in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," Levar Burton, the actor who played Kunta Kinte in "Roots," has been reborn as a futuristic space techie. And his race isn't even an issue; that's why he's blind. The new Kunta Kinte makes me feel like an anachronism. I can see that all the arguments I made were just a smoke screen, an attempt to avoid dealing with the underlying psychological problems.

Dr. Philipson says I'm definitely making progress. On the way out, I ask if I should have surgery like Michael Jackson did, but she doesn't think it's necessary at this point.

These days, a lot of people I know—others with the same sickness I had—want to know if they can be helped. And I always say the same thing: Only if they truly desire to change.

Today, I like to consider myself a recovered multiculturalist, but as they emphasize at the Multiculturalists Anonymous meetings, there is no such thing as a cure. Remember: One day at a time is our motto.

And yes, I admit I have to be vigilant against backsliding, because it wouldn't take much to set me back. I've had to drop out of the Modern Language Association—too many opportunities to fall back to my old ways. I squeeze my eyes shut when I pass the "Black Studies" section of a bookstore. I mean, my heart still pounds, but I make it through OK.

Like I said, one day at a time. □

ELLEN WILLIS: MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

The appeal of "identity politics" is that it arises from a radical insight—that domination is systematically structured into the relations between social groups. The problem is that it gives rise to a logic that chokes off radicalism and ends by supporting domination. If the present obsession with group identity as the basis of politics has made it hard to imagine, much less build, a broad-based radical collectivity, it has even more tellingly stood in the way of a principled commitment to the freedom and happiness of individuals, without which no genuine radicalism is possible. I agree, then, with Ilene Philipson's claim that identity politics is a dead end for the Left, but I disagree with her analysis—and with what I take to be its implications for the question of where we need to go from here.

Insurgent groups—particularly, at first, blacks and youth—were central to the revolt against the enforced cultural homogeneity of the 1950s. But the insistence on "authentic" self-expression that marked the counterculture and the early New Left championed individuality *against* the notion of a fixed, imposed identity. When white, middle-class bohemians appropriated aspects of black, Native American, and Eastern cultures, redefined clothes as costume, reinvented their names and personas, and proclaimed liberation from social roles the hallmark of expanded consciousness, they were not only rejecting their own cultural identities, but refusing to be bound by the categories of an inherited past. If anything, the politics of identity was a reaction against this refusal. For one thing, it was scary—if you could be anything, what were you? And then it turned out that identity was less malleable than we had imagined, that it wasn't so easy to shuck the patterns of feeling and behavior encoded in our ethnic/class/regional/sexual/religious heritages. Anyway, the freedom to pursue one's uniqueness was not equally available to all. Whites might use blackness as a metaphor for self-exploration; it didn't exactly work the other way. And the efforts of women and gays to explode the boundaries of patriarchal sexual identity found those borders well policed.

Ellen Willis is associate professor of journalism at New York University.

Before I go on, I should say what I understand "identity politics" to mean. The term is often used loosely on the Left, to refer to movements focused on the oppression of particular social groups. Yet divergent views of identity politics exist within these movements. Feminism, for instance, has probably done more than any other movement to elaborate the language of identity politics, but it has also expressed more powerfully than any other movement the impulse toward a utopian transcendence of identity. Nor, to my mind, is identity politics synonymous with either rights-based interest-group politics or cultural nationalism—though it's clearly congenial to both. What, then, is the nature of the beast? As I see it, the basic premise of identity politics is that membership in an oppressed group (in my case, as a woman or a Jew) determines my legitimacy as a political person, the validity of my political ideas, and indeed, my moral right to express them. Conversely, it assumes that as a member of a dominant group or majority (white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, etc.), I am morally bound to take political direction from the oppressed, since my experience, permeated as it is with privilege, can only steer me wrong.

This approach to politics doesn't stem from the quest for the "authentic self," though it does share with that quest the exaltation of experience over abstract thinking. On the contrary, it is rooted in Marxist ideas—specifically, that material conditions shape consciousness and that class antagonism is "objectively" built into the system—filtered through a characteristically American brand of moralism. In the 1960s the black power and radical feminist movements applied the class-struggle paradigm to racial and sexual politics. It proved to be a powerful tool of analysis, blowing away liberal cant and allowing an unsentimental view of power relations; it also led to ironies yet to be resolved. In both cases, the first enemies to be defined by the new paradigm were supposed friends, even intimates, and allies: for blacks, white coworkers in the civil-rights movement; for feminists, not only male New Leftists, but husbands, lovers, fathers. To make things even more intense, the very subject of the new wave of feminism was that previously taboo dimension—the politics embedded in "private," personal relations.

As a radical feminist, I believed that sexism was institutional, not just a matter of individual male attitudes, yet class struggle undertaken in such a close-to-the-bone context inevitably became a drama of anger and disappointment, accusation and guilt—in effect, of good and evil. According to my political analysis, there was no way for individual men simply to give up their supremacy—yet that was my implicit moral demand. I was righteous; and the men in my life were in an impossible moral position, where the only thing they could conceivably do to get off the hook was simply give up any agency at all and follow my lead (yet wouldn't this too be fundamentally oppressive, abdicating responsibility and putting it all on me?). Of course, when I turned my attention from sex to race, or (a bit later) to the gay-straight split or the emerging conflict between middle-class and working-class feminists, the positions were reversed.

Perhaps the most obvious drawback of this kind of politics is the balkanization of the movement into ever smaller and more particularist groups, as the ranks of the righteous thin steadily. But we should not overlook the way this process also balkanizes the self. Since most of us have complicated, mixed identities, partaking of both dominant and subordinate groups, and therefore morally ambiguous, it is hard, in the framework of identity politics, for any of us to see ourselves as principled radicals. (White, straight, middle-class male lefties, the big losers in the moral validation sweepstakes, often react by embracing traditional class politics—basically a form of identity politics for white, male blue-collar workers that still has a lot of moral prestige.)

Identity politics is also anti-intellectual; it substitutes moral pressure for argument. If the oppressor has no right to an opinion, there is no need to contest the substance of what he says; similarly, members of the oppressed group who dissent from the prevailing movement opinion can be dismissed as shills for the oppressor. It's tempting to fall into this censorious posture. For instance, like most feminists, I feel intense resentment toward men who pontificate on "the grave moral issue of abortion": Since they will never be unwillingly pregnant, they should have the grace to shut up. But what am I really asking? Not literally that they shouldn't have an opinion; I'm equally outraged by men who are indifferent (because after all they can afford to be) to an issue that impinges so crucially on my life. No, I want them to support my position, because I'm a woman and I know what I'm talking about. But faced with this demand, a man can reasonably point out that after all, women also disagree on abortion; if he relinquishes his right to independent judgment, how does he decide which women to support? At which point I can either insist that my female opponents are identifying with men and don't count, or I can drop the attempt to displace the issue of abortion onto the question of who is morally entitled to discuss it—a tactic that, depending on the social climate, may temporarily "win" by intimidating some liberal men into silence—and pursue a real debate.

For black intellectuals and activists, the Clarence

Thomas nomination—and more generally, the increased visibility of black conservatives and others who dissent from prevailing black opinion—presents a similar dilemma: It is tempting to demonize the dissenters as white people in disguise, rather than to confront the substance of their objections.

Yet free debate is essential, not only because ideas untested by argument become dogma (and reactionaries with terrible motives may still have good arguments), but because a democratic radicalism can only succeed through persuasion. Moral coercion is as undemocratic as any other kind. Nor should people be made to feel that their identities are contingent on conformity. Which brings me back to the problem I started with: Restricting people to fixed group identities violates the larger and more complex possibilities of their unique, individual, human selves. And it is precisely this violation that makes radical movements necessary.

In my view, the antidote to identity politics is not to hunt for an issue, such as Vietnam, that can bring our disparate movements together. Issues come and go, and often the unity they forge is more apparent than real: For some of us, Vietnam was about the antidemocratic nature of the corporate state; for others it was about pacifism or isolationism or identification with Third World nationalism; still others found it a way to avoid issues (like feminism and gay liberation) that were closer to home. And because of just such differences in outlook, the New Left was well on its way to disintegrating even as the war was still going on. What we need at this point is a radical vision based on recognizing a common *principle* in liberation movements—a commitment to freedom and against authoritarian hierarchies. We need to focus our attention on the place where the universally human and the culturally particular converge, in the desire for a democratic community where the "authentic self" can flourish.

The first step toward making such a vision work is accepting contradictions, understanding that although the personal is political, not all politics is personal. I believe that I share certain kinds of experience with all women; yet many women, including some feminists, disagree with my political ideas and are my bitter opponents on vital public issues. I believe that all men are implicated in a male supremacist system; yet many men whose personal relations with women leave a lot to be desired share my ideas, and are reliable allies on the corresponding issues. Taking shared political ideas and agreement about public policy as the starting point for a movement won't end conflict over social and cultural difference—not to mention conflict over the ideas and policies themselves. This approach can only offer the possibility of connections that go deeper than endlessly hyphenated coalitions. But that's more than we've had in a long time. □

David Biale: Jewish Identity in the 1990s

Universalism, it sometimes seems, is a peculiar symptom of Jewish particularism. At a time when most ethnic groups in America and, indeed, nations elsewhere—from the Baltics to Yugoslavia—are unselfconscious in asserting their identities, progressive Jews are agonizing over whether the cultivation of Jewish identity somehow constitutes a threat to a true universalist politics. It is as if the assertion of identity is acceptable only on the part of those currently oppressed, while groups like the Jews, who have largely succeeded in attaining power in America, feel guilty about ethnic self-identification. Put differently, there is an unarticulated perception on the Left that the flourishing of American Jewish culture, both in its establishment and countercultural versions, is profoundly reactionary since it is focused narrowly on Israel and on Jewish self-interest to the exclusion of a wider American—or universal—agenda.

In today's debate over multiculturalism, Jewish self-identification is all too often left to those who define Jewish culture in terms of an exclusivist, religious tradition and reject the possibility of a broader, secular Jewish culture as a legitimate form of human culture. One can hear many Jewish voices on the neoconservative side articulating the need for a narrowly normative canon, but few attempts to show how a distinctive Jewish culture might function in a more pluralist vision of America.

Jewish identity is not an essential and immutable component of those born Jewish. Unlike one's biological sex,

---

David Biale is director of the Center for Jewish Studies of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and is also a contributing editor of Tikkun.

it is not a product of genetics. Social forces certainly make escape problematic, but neither is it impossible, especially in contemporary America. I am uninterested in celebrating Jewish identity, and have no desire to preach conversion to those who believe that they can divest themselves of it. In the final analysis, all contemporary Jews in the U.S. are Jews by choice and that, too, is part of the content of Jewish identity.

Although I hold no brief for those who preach against assimilation and intermarriage, I nevertheless believe that many Jews will choose to remain Jews, to identify with the powerful narrative that is Jewish history. This identification will, no doubt, take many forms, revealing a type of pluralism that has its justification in Jewish history itself. Indeed, I would argue that only a narrow, religious definition of Jewish culture—"Judaism"—restricts the possibilities for contemporary Jewish identity. Only once this culture is understood as exactly that, a *secular culture,* can all the possibilities, from Orthodoxy to socialism, be taken as equally legitimate. A secular definition of Jewish culture is, therefore, the most inclusive and tolerant, for, unlike all other definitions, it is the only one that does not privilege itself.

What are some of the consequences of substituting Jewish culture for Judaism? The concept of culture is universal, although it is expressed in a variety of particular modes. Judaism, on the other hand, defines itself almost *a priori* in distinction to the Other, the *goy:* the holy nation that "dwells alone" as against the "nations of the world." Without the Other, the Jew of "Judaism" lacks definition. This distinction is but one instance of the whole discourse of distinctions that constitutes "Judaism": the Land of Israel versus the rest of the world, the Sabbath versus the rest of the days of the week, *kosher* versus *traif,* pure versus impure. Jewish culture, on the other hand, includes both sides of all these antinomies and, for the same reason, it also challenges the distinction between "Jew" and "goy." Not that such a distinction disappears altogether, but a broader notion of Jewish culture would dismantle the theological hierarchy it implies. The difference between "Jew" and "goy" would no longer be ontological; rather each would express a different manifestation of universal human culture.

This redefinition of Jewish culture is not merely a product of a modern, secular sensibility. In fact, there has been a persistent tendency in Jewish history to understand Jewish identity from just such a multicultural perspective. In the Bible itself, there is an evident tension between the concept of "chosenness," according to which Israel is a nation apart, and the sense that Israel must coexist with its neighbors, partaking in their culture as well. Indeed, the historical record suggests that ancient Israel was functionally a part of the broader Western Semitic culture, the culture of the Canaanites that the "Orthodox" editors of the Bible condemn as foreign and idolatrous. Similarly, in the later Hellenistic, Roman, and medieval periods, the Jews continually existed in creative tension with their cultural surroundings, preserving what was unique about themselves, but typically doing so in the language of their times. The Jews of Palestine in the centuries before and after the beginning of the Common Era, for example, spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and the culture they fashioned drew from all these sources. For much of Jewish history, then, what it meant to be a Jew was to be multilingual and multicultural.

I am not trying to deny the legacy of segregation and persecution by others or tendencies toward self-segregation. But I am claiming that there is no such thing as an autonomous Jewish identity, splendidly isolated from interaction and struggle with other cultures. To be a Jew means to partake in human culture as a whole and to express that culture in the context of Jewish tradition, just as it equally means to partake in Jewish culture and express it in terms of the broader culture in which one lives.

Such an interactive understanding of culture and identity should make us question seriously a "canon" in which only some cultures are included. Instead, we should conceive of different traditions that interact and contest with one another, a model of culture that involves constant struggle over boundaries. If this is one of the great legacies of Jewish culture, which is, after all, one of the most ancient and persistent of minority cultures, then the Jewish experience has much to offer to a theory of multiculturalism.

The great secular revolution in Jewish life at the beginning of this century, of which Zionism was the most important component, shattered the theological definition of Judaism and made possible a more inclusive approach to Jewish history. But the cultural consequences of this secular revolution have not yet been realized. What I have in mind is the Zionist notion of "normalizing" the Jewish people. In its most radical constructions, Zionism attacked Judaism as a "diaspora" phenomenon and redefined the Jews as a nation like all others. Taken to its logical conclusion, the political philosophy of this strand of Zionism sought to erase the theological distinction between the Jews and the nations of the world. In place of "Judaism" and a theology of the "chosen people," secular Zionism at its best wished to create a Jewish national culture that would be part of world culture.

The Zionist movement was always torn by tensions between this kind of secular ideal and secularized forms of national uniqueness. No national movement can be free of this particular problem. But by retaining the antinomy of "Israel" versus the "Galut," the Zionists perpetuated an aspect of the discourse they sought to overturn. In recent years, partly as a result of the Six Day War, the old language of Jewish chosenness has made its way back into Zionist ideology, and is accompanied in some extreme instances by new forms of Jewish racism. The continuing Arab-Israeli conflict has only reinforced the necessity of the Other in Jewish self-definition.

But the failure of Zionism to achieve its original secular vision does not mean that the vision was wrong. The political ramifications of realizing in Israel a vision of a secular Jewish culture that is part of world culture are still radical today. Whether we define it as "post-Zionism" or as something else, it requires finding a way to include the "goy"—that is, the Palestinians—in a Jewish body politic. One may be justifiably pessimistic about this possibility in Israel under Yitzhak Shamir. Power in Israel currently resides in the hands of those whose political heritage did not include a universalist vision of Zionism; theirs is a cramped and xenophobic nationalism. Secular, progressive Zionism is not yet dead, but it is critically ill.

Perhaps something of this vision can be kept alive here in the American diaspora, in which Jews, perforce, must find ways of living in a multicultural environment based not on power and hegemony but on coalitions and shared interests. Understood this way, perhaps Jewish agonizing about "universalism" versus "particularism" is a necessary part of a long historical debate. If one of the cardinal lessons of Jewish history is precisely the value of a multicultural identity, then the Jewish experience has something important to contribute to American culture: the lesson that no "universal" culture can exist without its "particular" moments and that no "particular" identity can exist in isolation from its larger setting. If we can succeed in defining and realizing this vision in America, perhaps we can give back to Israel something of what we have learned here, just as Israel and the historic Zionist movement gave us the secular definition of Jewish culture that we must now make our own. □

ARTHUR WASKOW: ONLY MORE SO

There is no alternative to identity politics.

I do not mean there is "no *good* alternative," but none at all. As Ellen Willis points out, even secular socialist class politics is really grounded in the identity of white male blue-collar workers. How then do we—all of us "wes"—go about agreeing on a "common principle" of what liberation and freedom and authoritarianism are?

It seems to me we can't. The best we can do is to draw on the experience and teaching of our own culture—whatever culture it is we each choose as the one that best speaks to our own individual experience—and then match up where we can. On getting rid of H-bombs, most Catholics and I can usually agree. On abortion, we rarely can.

Seen in these terms, an identity politics must always stretch to transcend itself, to learn from other cultures, to see itself as a microcosm of the human race, knowing that this "macrocosm" itself is only—only? wonderfully!—a glowing rainbow of cultures, each of which speaks even of universality through its own particular language.

Each culture—not only the ones that at the moment define themselves as "oppressed," but *each* culture—has within it a *real* range of struggles over how much to identify itself as the only *real* human culture and how much, in what ways, to reach beyond itself. So the real question is about the *specific content* of specific versions of identity politics.

I am a Jew who takes great delight in shaping my own version of identity politics by wrestling and dancing with all of Torah from Lilith to Jacob to Jeremiah to the Baal Shem Tov to Heschel to Plaskow. Let me now explore how I try to shape a Jewish identity politics.

"The Jews are just like everybody else," the old saying goes, "only more so." This truth is at the very heart not only of Jewish identity politics but also of Torah and of Jewish peoplehood.

Arthur Waskow is a lecturer and author. His books include Seasons of our Joy *(Bantam, 1982) and* Godwrestling *(Schocken, 1980). He is also director of The Shalom Center and Fellow of the Institute for Jewish Renewal.*

Does this mean that since we are just like everybody else it is unimportant for us to be ourselves? Or that the "only more so" is unimportant? Or that it is pointless for us to shape a politics within and from this "more so" identity?

For me, no. I work on this hypothesis: that the Jewish people is a practical research-and-development center for the human race, a sort of "Humanosphere II." Like "Biosphere II," it is a microcosm that is easier to watch and change and heal than is the macrosystem. Through it we can experiment in a small community with reaching toward the best possibilities for the broad world—the most holy, the most healing, the most liberating and inclusive possibilities.

Over the centuries, what we have come up with is not *the* truth, but only—and superbly—a *pointing toward* the truth. (Torah is a word from the field of archery—and it means not law, not teaching, but *aiming* the arrow toward the target.)

Who is running this experiment? Sometimes, when we have forgotten what it is all about and are just walking through it all by rote, no one. But when we awake and remember, the experimenter is both within us and beyond us. It is we ourselves, applying our own best self-awareness; and the odd confluences of history that have given us a special shape of our own; and ... who knows what else? A fusion of what is within us and beyond us that we can name "I Will Be Who I Will Be," or the "Breath of Life," YHWH.

I do not suggest that we are the only such micro-experiment in process—perhaps each people, all peoples, are called to play this role. As in any good experiment, each subject must have its own special place in a field of variables.

Different kinds of "identity politics" can flow from this identity—and always have. Identity politics was not invented yesterday. At the burning bush, Moses himself at first rejects the ethnic definition of his call—a "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is not enough—and experiences the urgent self-transforming and nation-shattering "I Will Be." Then he goes back to explain to Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews has sent him to seek liberation. There is no other choice at that moment but a politics of identity. How else can the message be given a shape, a language, an impetus?

But what is to be the *content* of identity politics? Is it only that *we* are targets, slaves, exiles, oppressed? That *we*—we alone—are alienated from the earth, shaken by our own sexuality, sad to die, troubled by our children and our parents, frightened by the responsibilities of power, awed by the immensity of life? Or is it that we are indeed all these things, and are searching on behalf of all humanity to explore, celebrate, resolve, and transcend these struggles?

Or to put it in more contemporary terms: There is the Black identity politics of Minister Louis Farrakhan, and there is the Black identity politics of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. King drew on and appealed to Black peoplehood, culture, and experience; he never separated himself from the community as his political base. *And* he taught that community to look upon itself as a model to teach from, for all Americans, all humans.

The urgent question for Jews, then, is what content we want to give to our identity politics. In shaping our own experiment from our greatest possible self-awareness, what do we think will most effectively serve our own good—and *therefore* the good of "Humanosphere I"?

I vote that Humanosphere I does not at this moment need another experiment in secularism. The distinction between secular and religious is not one of exclusivity versus inclusivity; both religion and secularity can be either inclusive or exclusive. Rather, this distinction speaks to the difference between seeking utter power and control for human beings over history, the earth, the psyche—and seeing and celebrating limits on the powers of human beings, limits that stem from a profound Mystery in life. There is certainly value in the search to widen our control over our destiny. Modernity has been a great step forward. But the besetting danger of modernity is that acting as if we are completely in control of the planet leads us to destroy it.

If there is to be some use for Jewish culture and some point to Jewish identity in our generation, it should reach beyond modernity and secularism. Not to vomit out their partial truths, but to digest them and then go beyond them.

Most basically this means treating as sacred the great modern discoveries of science, the equality of women, the plural and universal value of many peoplehoods—as well as celebrating the Mystery that lies both at the root and in the flowering of these discoveries.

As we seek to integrate these crucial truths into our ritual practice and communal life, we must also recover the strong, ancient sense of rhythms in time—birth, maturation, reflective repose, and rebirth—in the grand spirals of our own and all cultures, as well as in the small spirals of a "moonth," a year, a generation. Indeed, this "aiming" may be the most important way to heal the damage of modernity. Jewish culture has already made two important contributions to the restoration of these ancient rhythms. Most obvious is Shabbat—the day of rest that says it is crucial to pause from even the best and most important work, to catch our breath, to reflect, to reevaluate, to celebrate, to *be*.

THE PERFECT CHANUKAH GIFT!

TIKKUN ANTHOLOGY

Essays, Poetry and Fiction from our First Five Years.

Woody Allen • Abba Eban • Carol Gilligan • Jessica Benjamin • Marge Piercy • Judith Plaskow • Susannah Heschel • Peter Gabel • Todd Gitlin •David Biale • Annie Dillard • Arthur Waskow • Ruth Rosen • Michael Lerner • David Mamet • Arthur Green • Cornel West • Allen Ginsberg • Abbie Hoffman • Michael Walzer • Benny Morris • Linda Gordon... and many more.

A perfect gift for the holidays or a treat for yourself.

Paperback: $19.85, Hardback $42.85.
(prices include postage and handling)

From: **TIKKUN Books,**
5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA. 94619

For five hundred years, since 1492, the human race has not made Shabbat. We have addicted ourselves to making, doing, inventing, developing, amassing, controlling. All these activities are good—in a context in which there is also Shabbat. They become destructive where there is not Shabbat.

So how can we create a Jewish "identity politics" that carries the notion of Shabbat to all peoples? I do not mean only the seventh day, but also the deeper truths of the pause that renews: pausing in technology to reevaluate it; pausing in development to assess its impact on the seventh generation; pausing in building new institutions to dissolve the most encrusted of the old ones....

Less obvious than Shabbat, but related to it, is another experimental success in the Jewish "Humanosphere II" that we could bring to all the peoples of the world: the notion, for example, that pausing from an old path, reflecting on it, learning from it, and then going beyond it does not require the extinction of our old identity. Why is this important to learn? The whole human race has come to a place where transformation or death are the choices. Modernity has changed the very chemical and biological makeup, let alone the psychological and political structures of the planet. There will be no going back, and no standing still. At such a moment, modern secular ideology teaches that there is only a straight line forward. The past is by definition wrong.

What Judaism not only teaches but has experienced is that we are not stuck with the two choices of endless repetition in a circle or a straight-line forward march into the abyss. The flow of Jewish time and the pattern of Jewish thought is in a spiral. We go back in order to go forward. We draw on the ancient wisdom not to be imprisoned by it, but to spiral upward. We make Shabbat not as a moment of collapse, but as a time of reflection—so that the next work week will not begin in the same place as the old, but can draw on the rich lessons of the past, and begin anew. And we do this not only in the small rhythms of the week, but also in the grand rhythm of Jewish civilization's renewal.

This is not just theory. At least once in its history, the Jewish people has radically remade itself. It drew on and transformed its ancient wisdom in a new context, came into someplace deeply new, and yet kept a full sense of its own identity, its identification with the version of itself that went before. This was the dynamic behind the transformation of the Talmud. The rabbis digested Hellenism and drew on the ancient Torah—and within this new synthesis they affirmed that they were still the same people of Israel that had gone forth from slavery in Egypt.

This history bears a lesson the world desperately needs to learn. For there is plenty of evidence that if the existing cultures of the earth are convinced that to change means to die, they will choose to die rather than change. Having lived through the possibility of something else, the Jewish people of Humanosphere II can bear witness to a more creative possibility.

But of course we must transform ourselves as well, since we are in our small Humanosphere living through the same earthquake as all the other peoples. The transformation can be spiritually rooted and religiously expressed without being exclusive.

This, indeed, is the basic challenge to a new Jewish identity politics: Can we draw on the whole four thousand years of our experience, including the last few hundred years of being shattered and almost consumed, not to whine that we are unique but to celebrate that others are like us? That our experience is needed if others are to survive along with us? That the chutzpah we need is a kind of holy chutzpah, daring in its assertion that we know some useful things and humble in its understanding that we are like everybody else—only more so? □

Three perfect gifts.

For Chanukah.
For Christmas.
For any occasion.

1) *Tikkun* for a friend.
2) *Tikkun* Anthology.
3) *Tikkun* for yourself.

Yes, I want to give *Tikkun* as a gift.

Tikkun subscribers can give gift subscriptions at the low holiday rate of $22/year ($8 off the newsstand price). Non-subscribers must pay $25/year for gift subscriptions.

_____
Your Name/Address

_____
Your City/State/Zip/Country

Please send gift cards right away to:

1. _____ ☐ $22 ☐ $25
Name Address City/State/Zip/Country

2. _____ ☐ $22 ☐ $25
Name Address City/State/Zip/Country

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later Charge my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

_____ / _____ TOTAL AMOUNT $_____
Charge Card Acct. No. Exp. date

Foreign subscribers: Payment must be made in U.S. funds drawn from a U.S. bank or with an international money order in U.S. funds. Add $12/year per subscription for Canada and Mexico, $16 for all other countries. Israeli subscribers can also give a gift by sending 65 shekel to *Tikkun*, P.O. Box 10528, Jerusalem 91103.

Make checks payable to *Tikkun*. Offer valid thru 12/31/91. Order now—prices go up in 1992! XXTK31

Yes, I want a *Tikkun* Anthology.

The best of *Tikkun*, including Woody Allen, Marge Piercy, Susannah Heschel, Abba Eban, Michael Lerner, Cornel West, Peter Gabel, Carol Gilligan, Michael Walzer, Judith Plaskow, David Mamet, Jessica Benjamin, Arthur Waskow, David Biale, Todd Gitlin, Rachel Adler, Allen Ginsberg, Benny Morris, and more.

☐ Hardback: $39.95 _____ (Qty.) ☐ Paperback: $16.95 _____ (Qty.) plus $2.90 postage

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later Charge my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

_____ / _____ TOTAL AMOUNT $_____
Charge Card Acct. No. Exp. date

☐ Send to me:

_____
Name/Address

_____
City/State/Zip/Country

☐ And/or a gift to:

_____
Name/Address

_____
City/State/Zip/Country

Payment must be made in U.S. funds drawn from a U.S. bank or with an international money order in U.S. funds. Make checks payable to *Tikkun*. BANT31

Yes, I want to subscribe to *Tikkun*.

$25/one year (six issues) ☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later
$48/two years (12 issues) Charge my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

or call toll-free:
1-800-877-5231

_____ / _____
Charge Card Acct. No. Exp. date

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____
City/State/Zip/Country

Foreign subscribers: Payment must be made in U.S. funds drawn from a U.S. bank or with an international money order in U.S. funds. Additional postage: $12/year for Canada and Mexico, $16 for all other countries. Israeli subscribers: Subscribe in shekelim! Send 75 shekel to *Tikkun*, P.O. Box 10528, Jerusalem 91103.

Make checks payable to *Tikkun*. Valid through 12/31/91. Order now—prices go up in 1992! BTKN31

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 83 MT. MORRIS, IL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

TIKKUN
P.O. Box 332
Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7735

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 920 OAKLAND, CA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

TIKKUN
5100 Leona Street
Oakland, CA 94619-9968

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 83 MT. MORRIS, IL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

TIKKUN
P.O. Box 332
Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7735

Alma Di

Ari Elon

When Ari Elon's Alma Di *was published in Israel in 1990, it created an enormous wave of excitement and controversy. With its brilliant, poetic Hebrew and its singular combination of autobiography, talmudic commentary, and reflection on modern Jewish identity, Elon's little book seemed to offer a genuinely original vision, a kind of anti-traditional Judaism deeply rooted in a new reading of traditional sources.* Tikkun *is proud to bring an excerpt from this work with the hope that the whole will soon be published in English.*

Alma Di was an orphan child from Rechavia. No one knew his real name. Rumor has it that he left the country in the seventies, but others stubbornly believe that he was reported missing in the Sinai at the end of the War of Attrition, and has never been seen since.

When Alma Di's father died, he came to the synagogue with his grandfather to say Kaddish. Toward the end of the service, the room would fill with tension; the children of Sha'arei Chesed would abruptly stop lying outside the synagogue windows and would crowd up near the open door, waiting mischievously for the Kaddish.

Alma Di would stand and recite the Kaddish, murmuring mysteriously:

Yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba b'alma di.
B'ra dirutei veyamlich.
Malchutei b'chayeichun uveyomeichun.
D'chol beit yisrael ba'agala.
Ubizman kariv ve'imeru.
Amen.

(Glorified and sanctified be God's name
throughout the world that
He has created according to his will may he
establish
His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days
And within the life of the entire house of Israel
speedily
And soon and say
Amen.)

Translated by Abby Greenfield Goldgeier.

The children could barely keep from exploding into laughter and answered "Amen" in a chorus. Alma Di would leave the synagogue with his grandfather, running in front of him, kicking along little stones and pinecones. The children would yell "Alma Di" to each other, and I never found out if he knew that they were calling him names.

Many years later I was to discover that the Kaddish that had been said by him in such a mysterious manner would supply me with the key sentence of my life: *Yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba b'alma di*—Glorified and sanctified be his name in the world of Di.

The hackneyed Kaddish revealed to me the existence of the World of Di—an imaginary world that exists beyond the borders of this world, where God lives in all His Glory.

Since then, I have known that God is dead in this world, but in Alma Di he lives forever, and there His name is sanctified.

And I also know that the necessary condition for God's glory and sanctity in Alma Di is his death in this world. It was the absolute recognition of his death, and the feeling of being orphaned, that propelled me into a search for His presence in an infinite number of possible worlds.

Kaddish Yatom (A chapter from an abandoned novel—written in New York, 1978)

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, I murdered him out of mercy. I couldn't stand to see his suffering. During the whole of his last year he would wander through the streets of Jerusalem—a giant *talit* wrapped around his Shabbat clothes, his eyes extinguished, his lips murmuring mysteriously:

"Shabbat today . . . it is forbidden to put on tefillin! . . . It is forbidden to tear the strings that mark the Shabbat boundaries! . . . Shabbat today."

Day after day the children of Jerusalem would stone him and set their dogs on him. The dogs would tear his talit from his shoulders and he would continue to murmur:

"Shabbat today . . . it is forbidden to put on tefillin . . .

it is forbidden to throw stones at dogs....

"Why, children, do you throw stones at dogs? They will run off to the edge of town and tear the strings of the Shabbat boundary, and Jerusalem will not be marked off from the rest of the world.... Shabbat today ... it is forbidden to put on tefillin...."

I could not watch his misery. I closed my eyes and I bit my lip and I tore the last strings that bound him to this world.

After that I went out into the streets of Jerusalem and said Kaddish Yatom, the Mourners' Kaddish. Three days and three nights I wandered through the streets and I said Kaddish, murmuring mysteriously:

Yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba b'alma di.
B'alma di yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba.
Shmei raba b'alma di yitgadal veyitkadash.

(Glorified and sanctified be God's great name in Alma Di.
In Alma Di glorified and sanctified be God's great name.
God's great name in Alma Di be glorified and sanctified.)

Three days and three nights I wandered through the streets of Jerusalem, recalling the glorious days he had granted me as a child. Then I mourned him for seven consecutive years.

In my childhood he used to carry me on the wings of his imagination, and used to know all my thoughts before I thought them. Every day he walked me to school through the Sha'arei Chesed alleyways, Nachla'ot and the Shuk of Machane Yehuda. Every day he would skip behind me over the roofs of houses, and help me cross the streets before there were traffic lights in Jerusalem.

During prayers he would float between the synagogue lamp and the ceiling and set the sights of my thoughts to shoot toward the godly. And when I tiptoed to the refrigerator and opened it, he waited for me there—and I could not eat the ice cream until three full hours had passed since lunch. He never got angry. He only made me feel ashamed.

On Shabbat he would accompany me to the Betar soccer game. The YMCA stadium would be roaring with thousands of fans who crowded outside the walls, on the roof, and on the tops of cypress trees. Above them rose the YMCA tower that was, for many years, the highest building in Jerusalem—the closest to the sky. Above the tower he hovered like an eagle, as far away as possible from this horrible Shabbat desecration, far from the whistling, far from the obscene language. Even there he didn't get angry at me. Only he made my cheeks flush and burn from shame throughout the whole game.

When we played hide-and-seek he floated above us—and saw everything. And when I leaned my head against the counting stone and counted to a hundred—I would count with great purpose (*kavannah*)—as if praying—on my right is Michael, to my left Gabriel, at my front Uriel, and at my back Raphael, one two three I'm coming to find you....

Up the steep hill of Keren Kayemet climbed the old women of Sha'arei Chesed. He would push them from behind—helping them overcome the earth's gravity. And when they stopped in their tracks, too tired to move, he would hold them up until they gathered enough strength to move on. At the top of the grade he would help them change gears and merge onto level ground.

At noon, he would stop the secular kids who were coming out of the Gymnasium, and keep them on the curb until that speeding car that pounced out from around the corner passed. And when the children of Sha'arei Chesed slid down the hill on handmade wooden sleds, he would toss their sidelocks in the wind, and brake their sleds at the bottom of the hill.

Once, secretly, I asked myself: "How come he gets to be God, and I don't?... What luck he had to be chosen over everybody to be God...." I was very jealous of him, and I tried to hide it from him. But at the top of Keren Kayemet Street, on the corner of Sha'arei Chesed, he told me that he knew, and I blushed.

He wasn't angry. But a dull and distant ache began to split my internal walls. The ache of heresy. The pain of overpowering sadness. I envied him—I remember that clearly. I was jealous that he was God and I was not. And this jealousy saddened my heart.

But even sadder to me was the knowledge that I could not hide my jealousy from him.

And I taught myself to bury my envy. Slowly I learned to hide my envy from him.... "Why is he God and I'm not?" I asked myself, and he didn't know.

He didn't know.

And sometimes he couldn't even fully understand the meanings in my prayers. I would suddenly find myself alone, sunk deep in purposeful prayer and I was hardly able to come back up before losing my breath. It frightened me.

Every year he became a little more tired. Sometimes he would even fall asleep while I was saying the bedtime "Sh'ma." "Behold, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps—may Michael be at my right hand and Gabriel at my left, there's no one in front or in back of me, one two three I'm coming to look...."

All night I looked. I never fell asleep. I was afraid of the dark.

And I was afraid of my passion for purpose in prayer. The more fervently I prayed, the more my fear grew that I was talking to myself. And the stronger my desire to pray, the stronger the fear that I was lying to myself. To myself.

I wanted him too much. Too much. Without mediators. Direct. I sang songs to him. Directly. Day after day I sang songs to him. And I bound his head with crowns—bands of unrequited love. I pulled him up from the earth with my invisible strings, and he became my kite. He was my rainbow in a cloud. I ran and pulled the strings of his kite. I ran and fell, I cried and got up, I sang before him a new song and I kept on running and falling, crying and rising and singing before him a new song.

I was pulled too violently toward him. And I pulled too hard on his invisible strings. I tore them. He continued to fly through his empty skies, in complete isolation, disconnected.

And completely disconnected, he continued to wander through the streets of Jerusalem, mumbling: "Shabbat today.... It is forbidden to put on tefillin!... It is forbidden to tear the strings that mark the Sabbath boundaries!... Shabbat today...!"

The children of Jerusalem threw rocks at him, and their dogs tore his *talit* from his shoulders. He continued to mutter: "Why, children, do you throw stones at the dogs? They will run to the outskirts of town and tear the strings that mark the Sabbath boundaries, and then Jerusalem will no longer be marked off from the rest of the world.... Shabbat today.... It is forbidden to put on tefillin...."

For ten years I ran away from the murder. I killed him out of mercy. For ten years I traveled between cities of refuge, changed identities, jumped borders. I left ruined gardens in my wake. Ownerless orchards. For ten years I enjoyed the fruits of ownerlessness.

When the *yetzer* (impulse) came upon me, I dressed in black, wrapped myself in black, and went out to whistle in the field at the bottom of Keren Kayemet where we used to play hide-and-seek. One two three I went to look. For many hours I wandered through the field, whistling softly the tunes of Kol Nidrei, Yedid Nefesh, whistling Oh my Lord, why hast thou forsaken me...?

I was careful not to pass near any synagogues—lest my evil *yetzer* lead me inside. "It is just the melodies"—he will say to me—"It's to hear the melodies that you enter the synagogue. Not the content, not the words. You'll just make sounds. Don't move your lips, they'll think you're drunk, not praying. After all, one isn't violating the law if one sings the melody without pronouncing the forbidden words...."

This was a most sophisticated heavenly trap. So I rose to the sky and didn't return to earth until I had completed my mourning. I stayed there erasing all the tangible lines I had drawn as a child between him and me. In order to tear the invisible strings. Even now, when I raise my weary eyes to the sky I see a weave of hundreds of thousands of lines—the warped lines of my childhood, crossed out by those of my adolescence. I did not fight him from the ground. I ambitiously desired to attack him in his heavenly outpost. It was a long war, I neither won nor lost.

But when I returned to earth, tired and bruised, I observed, to my astonishment, that the earth had been flooded with renewed currents of sky. I was drowning in sky, and I didn't know whether I was coming or going.

Until one day I realized a great disaster, that the great wall that I had so zealously built between me and him—who wasn't there—was no other than a great wall between me and other humans—who were there. An arrogant and an intolerant wall.

A repressed rage accumulated, and I had no one at which to direct it. A screen spun of crossed-out lines between me and the world. Black on sky. I was so angry at him for never having existed, and angry that he was never going to exist. I blamed him for leaving me without a goal at which to direct my aims, a place toward which I could devote all my devotions.

And the more the rage grew, the greater became a new desire: the desire to take on responsibility. The desire to be close to people. And a longed-for sleep began to lift from my eyes. And my ever-growing desire to be close to people forced me to speak in his name. What will be will be. But could I possibly come to them, cast a silence over the synagogue and announce that he did not exist?

And on the first day of Elul, 1976—exactly ten years after his death—I cast a silence over the synagogue and began to speak in his name.

Since then I am a rabbi. Since then I am loved and revered.

Since then I am the young rabbi of a congregation of elderly New York Jews in the old-age home Sha'ar Hashamayim (The Gates of Heaven), which is situated at the bottom of the Lower East Side.

Since then and to this day, this is my one and only mission: to make certain that, till the day they die, my old people won't taste the taste of his death. That they won't look back. I dedicate all my time to the building of a sophisticated system of illusions, which will cause

them to keep looking forward. Toward the East.

From this East—my East—I illuminate the hall and its occupants. Seizing the corners of the ark, I spout fiery speech.

"The Kodosh-Boroch-Hu listens...." I bring them the good news, "The Kodosh-Boroch-Hu sees.... The Kodosh-Boroch-Hu knows...."

And their eyes shine. Oh, how their eyes shine....

Since then and to this day I haven't ruined any gardens; I haven't denied the essential God, nor, for that matter, the nonessential one, and I haven't changed a thing in the Shulkhan Aruch, the code of religious law, of my old people. At their age, change brings doubt and worry into their hearts. Every custom they keep, I keep. My only responsibility is my responsibility toward them. Together we put on tefillin. Together we keep the Sabbath. From Sabbath to Sabbath, the length of our weekdays becomes shorter. From Sabbath to Sabbath we retreat into ourselves.

From Sabbath to Sabbath, the pain of new yearning forms within me. A bittersweetness of Galut cleaves my tongue to my palate, and nice old men spin around me a delicate web of dreams. Beyond them the violence of the poor black people. Beyond that the violence of rich white people.

I am a barrier set up to keep them safe from the violence around us—and they are a wall of innocence between me and the abyss.

They give content to the shortening days from Sabbath to Sabbath. They help me forget about that octopus they call New York that extends its slow tentacles in every direction. From Sabbath to Sabbath she annihilates herself. From Sabbath to Sabbath we sing the melodies of "Se'udah Shlishit" deeper into the week.

Last autumn we remained seated around the Shabbat table until dawn. That day we didn't put on tefillin. Since that day we haven't put on tefillin on Sunday. From Sabbath to Sabbath a dream web is spun about Jerusalem. And mountains folded into the web. And that glorious pain of yearning returns. May our eyes behold thy return to Zion, and to Jerusalem your city, you shall return in mercy, and you shall reside in her as you said....

I will never return to live in Jerusalem. She is no longer marked off from the rest of the world. Her western neighborhoods touch those of the Eastern coastal plain, and the strings that mark off the Shabbat boundaries are completely torn.

A city without Shabbat boundaries—what interest could I have in it? I have chosen for myself a congregation in a godforsaken city. There I toil to transform all the stones and trees of Jerusalem into words. Into prayers. Into dreams dreamt in Yiddish.

For the sake of my old people, I will not keep silence. For their sake I climb up the electrified ladder. I carry their prayers up invisible rungs. The ladder is very high and they are afraid to come near it. I transfer their prayers to a higher heaven, to a nonexistent level. I am their porter—they shove tips into the many pockets of my overalls. The large number of coins makes my climb even more difficult. They pull me downward like weights. I climb up with a prayer and come down empty-handed. And they walk back and forth on the platform and they talk about this, and they talk about that, and they watch the automatic timetable whose letters and hours are constantly changing. Trains keep coming. Trains keep going.

Every so often they put their right hands into the inside pocket of their jackets, draw out a gold watch, inspect it, and compare the time on their watches with the time of the big clock on the wall. And when they return the gold watch to the inner pocket of their coat, they make sure that their return ticket is still there. They finger it one more time just to be certain.

They drink my words with tears of happiness, and at the end of the sermon they pray with great fervor for their souls. And I don't dare ask them to pray for my erring soul—my soul is the broken reed that supports them. How could I dare proclaim in their ears that she is lost and lonely? Have I come to destroy their world? Who am I and what is my accursed journey toward honesty in contrast to the World-to-Come of hundreds of harmless and innocent believers?

Every day I say to myself: "See I have set before you this day responsibility and truth, and you shall choose responsibility."

Every day I choose responsibility.

Responsibility is the ability to sacrifice three times a day my own private truth. To pray Shacharit to an empty sky. And Mincha. And Aravit. And on Shabbat—a day of exaltation—to lie to myself four times a day. And on Yom Kippur—the Sabbath of Sabbaths—to pray Aravit to a dark and empty sky, Shacharit to a day-breaking and empty sky, Musaf to a burning and empty sky, Mincha to an exhausted and empty sky, and Ne'ila to a setting and empty sky.

In the beginning there were human sacrifices. After that animal sacrifices—a substitute. Then there were prayers—a substitute for the animals. After that human sacrifices—a substitute for prayers. Me, I'm a human sacrifice. A daily sacrifice. Burning alive on my coals. Of my own will I stretch out my neck, so that my believers will be able to pray.

I get up every morning and wrap myself in a warm, white *talit*. Then I close my eyes for a while. I listen to the conflict within me. To the daily conflict between

Truth and Responsibility. And at the end of this long, painful hour, when Responsibility wins, I bind myself in preparation for sacrifice by winding black straps of tefillin around my arm, tightening them around my forehead. I say:

Yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba b'Alma Di.
B'Alma Di yitgadal veyitkadash shmei raba.
Shmei raba B'Alma Di yitgadal veyitkadash.

After that I experience a certain sense of relief, so that I am able to grab the corners of the ark and spout fiery speech:

"... Do not understand, my old people, the Kaddish that you chant morning noon and night. Orphaned Jews never understood the Kaddish Yatom.

"... Do not understand, my orphans, I will understand for you. I will understand for you, and you will say *Amen Yehei shmei raba B'Alma Di.*"

Do not be afraid, a day draws near that is neither day nor night, and on that day the platform will be splendidly adorned. A terminal with velvet rugs. The cars will be covered in a red Parochet, and the track will be a gangway to the sky. You will walk calmly back and forth on the splendid platform and I shall load the cars with your prayers. On each and every prayer I will write "HEAVEN" in the letters used for Kiddush Levana (the Blessing of the New Moon).

At the end of the journey, when you reach the sky, you will find your prayers rotating along the automatic luggage belt. You will locate them from a distance, and angels, elevator boys in yellow berets, will load them for you onto luggage carts. An angel in a blue beret will wait for you there. You won't move, but the elevator will go up, up, up. You will experience a long Sabbath. A very long Sabbath. Without tefillin. Without torn strings. Elevators will mount toward the sky. Elevators will mount beyond the sky, until you are torn from the sky's gravity. You'll travel on and on. You are children—you'll go up and up and won't fall down. And silence. The whole sky will be sealed off by a sound barrier. The whole sky will be tranquil. You won't know sadness. You don't want Jerusalem. Because this will be your Jerusalem. And the sky: blue into purple into sky blue.

Do not be afraid, my elderly ones, take only a few possessions. The return ticket, and the gold watch, and the Prayer Before a Journey. And there won't be sound to your song—only your lips will move and you will be praying and drunk. Drunk and praying. The whole sky will be sealed off by a sound barrier. Blue into purple. Purple into sky blue....

Each day I am careful not to take an overdose.
The students at the Gymnasium were taken aback at my appearance. After all, isn't the "Judaism Teacher" supposed to have a yarmulke and a beard and his tzitzis hanging out? When I asked them if they wear those cardboard yarmulkes in math class, they laughed and said:

"Of course not. We wear them only in Judaism classes!"

When I asked them what they meant by "Judaism classes," they answered:

"You know, the subjects that the religious guys teach!"

"And you," I asked them, "Are you Jewish?"

"Us?—Not so much ... a little ... they're much more Jewish than we are...."

It was then that I felt that the Jewish people had voluntarily given up the document that the Zionist revolution had handed them, that freed them from oppression. They had retreated back into the pre-emancipatory ghetto; into an era in which the national identity card was a membership card in the rabbinic sect.

We have come full circle: The rabbis who were the sole custodians of the Rabbinic Sect's Principles of Faith in the Galut will continue to define the people's national identity in their own land. This nation continues to choose their authority. This nation cannot stop being a sect. I have nothing in common with them.

And the Galut in me packed its bags.

Since then my bags are packed. Since then I exile myself every day from my land and take off to a Galut that is much more exciting than the earthly one. I fly to Pombedita and Nahard'ah, the great cities that sprawl along the banks of the Euphrates. There I discuss with Rashi and Rabbi Akiva the disputes between Abaye and Raba. There I ask Rabbi Yochanan twenty-four questions and he gives me twenty-four answers, and one tractate stretches out as long as the Galut, and Rav Rachumi joins us along with Bar Yochai and Yehuda Ibn Chiya and with Hagra and Choni and Reish Lakish and Elisha ben Abuyah and all the children of Sha'arei Chesed.

The Babylonian Talmud is my inspirational springboard to the lands of Alma Di. The Torah of Pombedita and Nahard'ah is my medicinal drug. But I must be careful not to take an overdose, and not to get drunk on heights—this Torah is the essence of life but it can easily become the essence of Death, as it says in the Talmud: "If he is worthy it will be a Life drug, but if he is not worthy, it will become a Death drug...." (Yoma, 72).

Since Elul of 1975 I am addicted to the Galut of Pombedita and Nahard'ah, a Galut that is more exciting and more dangerous than any other Galut. And if my first Galut (to New York) was the direct result of the death of my childhood God who created me in His own image, then this second Galut is living testimony to the birth of the God that I created in my own image.

Every day I create God in my own image and fly with him to my roof in Pombedita.

(Continued on p. 93)

Current Debate: High Art or Hard-Core?

Misjudging Mapplethorpe: The Art Scene and the Obscene

Rochelle Gurstein

The controversy over the public exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's explicit photographs of sadomasochism is the most recent act in a seemingly interminable cultural drama that has been performed with astonishing regularity since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From the liberal side of the auditorium, the plot revolves around the battle waged by radical, freedom-loving artists heroically struggling for self-expression or social change against a nation of philistines, prurient prudes, book-burning censors, and religious fanatics. From the conservative side, the drama centers on decent, law-abiding citizens locked in a death stance against the threat aimed at individual morality and common decency by provocateurs, bohemians, and perverts. There is a strange typicality in Anthony Lewis's overwrought plea to liberals, "Fight the Philistines": "A small band of religious zealots and right-wing political opportunists is trying to show the world that America is an intolerant Puritan country, contemptuous of artists." By the same token, the conservative position is marked by predictable handwringing and name-calling, as when Jesse Helms repeatedly deplored government subsidies of "slime and sleaze," and lamented the "assault on the nation's basic values by those self-proclaimed artists who insist on mocking the American people."

The shrill tone that characterizes both sides of the argument indicates an ever-increasing hardening of positions, approaching the state of rigor mortis. After all, our society now tolerates and even encourages explicit images and inordinate amounts of talk about sex at school, in the mass media, in art, literature and in the theatre, in politics and in the courts, especially in the Supreme Court. Since our common world is inundated with descriptions and images of sex and violence, what was it about the Mapplethorpe exhibition that ignited cries of obscenity?

As we all know, the issue of obscenity heated up only because the exhibition, which had already appeared at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia without causing a stir, was held at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington's own backyard, and only then because it was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Repeatedly, conservative leaders such as Orrin Hatch and Jesse Helms claimed that the bill they sponsored, which sought to restrict the kind of material the NEA should fund, had nothing to do with censorship; rather it was an issue of government sponsorship. (After all, these self-avowed warriors against smut do not put up much of a fight against the $8 billion industry of pornography, presumably because it does not ask for government handouts.) What was at stake, then, was not the public's interest in or engagement with contemporary art—which, as everyone knows, is minimal—but rather how its hard-earned tax dollars were going to be spent. In any case, the real lack of power of conservatives in cultural matters was shown up when the Senate voted 73 to 24 to let the courts, not the legislature, decide what is obscene or pornographic.

Because of the overwrought atmosphere fueled by extravagant assertions and counterassertions, it is easy to lose sight of the actual fate of the Mapplethorpe exhibition: The Cincinnati jury ultimately found in favor of the Contemporary Arts Center. Twelve people from all walks of life determined that Mapplethorpe's photographs, including one of a man urinating into another man's mouth, and another of Mapplethorpe himself posing with the handle of a bullwhip inserted deep into his buttocks and the rest of the whip flowing outward, were *not* obscene. With this verdict in, the cultural Left should rest assured that virtually anything can now appear in public and that the concept of obscenity, at least as formulated by the law, can apparently be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Partisans of the cultural Left, however, having made a career out of shocking the bourgeoisie for nearly one hundred years, now appear unable to recognize or acknowledge the severely weakened condition of their historical enemy. Let us make no mistake here: While

---

Rochelle Gurstein is currently completing a book on obscenity and privacy, The Repeal of Reticence.

Mapplethorpe's sadomasochistic photographs shock, they do not do so in the manner of the original avant-garde. Manet's *Le dejeuner sur l'herbe,* for example, shocked his audience not only because of the jarring subject matter of the painting, but also because of its aesthetic innovation. In fact, most of Mapplethorpe's photographs are not only unexceptional as provocative fare, but they also fall completely within the mainstream of contemporary art. While many of his high-contrast, artsy portraits of "society," art-world, movie, and fashion celebrities would be just as at home in tony magazines such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* as in galleries and museums, Mapplethorpe was more than just a stylish photographer (even though at the end of his life he expressed interest in doing "fashion work"). In his portraits of black nude men, rather than incorporating the slick imagery of fashion and advertising, he took his inspiration from the iconographic gestures and poses of the art-school drawing studio—male nudes sitting on stools, standing on pedestals, breathless, frozen, so as not to distract the student's concentration during his anatomy lesson—as well as from master drawings such as those of Leonardo da Vinci. His close-up, cropped pictures of flowers in full bloom (with all their erotic associations) carry out the same art-historical self-consciousness, but this time in the realm of still life. These photographs, which were made in the 1980s, however, were not the issue; rather it was his work as a fledgling artist in the 1970s, his chronicle of the underworld bathhouse culture—sometimes recorded in Polaroid snapshots—that was at the center of the storm.

The artistic status of Mapplethorpe's pictures of the apparatuses and conduct of violent sex is all-important, since the determination of obscenity cannot be made if the work has "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." By paying close attention to three types of defenses made on Mapplethorpe's behalf, we shall see how contemporary artistic practice and criticism have come to such a pass that stark records of sexual violence have come to qualify as art. We shall also see how many cultural arbiters, like many political theorists, are straitjacketed by a mode of discourse that narrowly conceives of disputes over what should appear in public in terms of individual rights—in this case the artist's right of expression—rather than in terms that address the public's interest in the quality and character of our common world.

Unlike obscenity trials during the nineteenth century, in which, for example, one judge could confidently instruct a jury, "The case is one that addresses itself largely to your good judgment, common sense, and knowledge of human nature and the weaknesses of human nature," contemporary determinations of obscenity rely almost exclusively on expert opinion. This emphasis on professionals not only points to the devaluation of the ordinary person's good judgment, common sense, and knowledge of human nature, it also suggests that art today is so esoteric that such capacities have little to do with an active engagement with or appreciation of art. Certainly the expert testimony offered to the Cincinnati jury by Janet Kardon, then the director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, where the exhibition originated, dripped with contempt for these faculties when she spoke of the "aesthetic value" of the "centrality of the forearm" in a photograph of a couple "fisting" (that is, where a man penetrates another man with his fist). This insult to common sense came from the gullible art professional who had published a telling interview with Mapplethorpe in the catalogue accompanying the Philadelphia show:

> **Mapplethorpe:** When I've exhibited pictures ... I've tried to juxtapose a flower, then a picture of a cock, then a portrait, so that you could see they were the same thing.... I did a picture of a guy with his finger up a cock. I think that for what it is, it's a beautiful picture, because the hand gestures are beautiful.... What it happens to be doing, it happens to be doing, but that's an aside.
>
> **Kardon:** Let's look at it another way. You bestow elegance on a subject one would never consider elegant—in the photographs of the cocks, for example. One might not say a cock was elegant.
>
> **Mapplethorpe:** I might.
>
> **Kardon:** All right, one might....

Mapplethorpe's deadpan remarks that anything can be beautiful—mirrored in Kardon's unbounded enthusiasm to suspend moral judgment in favor of aesthetic values—are a defining characteristic of the modernist aesthetic. While Oscar Wilde is perhaps the best-known and most brilliant practitioner of what is commonly called art for art's sake, this aesthetic also has a particularly American version, which first emerged when cultural radicals assaulted Puritanism and "the genteel tradition" at the beginning of this century. H.L. Mencken's famous essay "Puritanism as a Literary Force" (1917), in which he mocked the conventional wisdom that "literature was conceived not as a thing in itself, but merely as a handmaid to politics or religion" is representative of this perspective. Mencken also offered what would soon become the conventional modernist antidote for the excesses of moralism. All books, he insisted, should be judged "by their form and organization as works of

art" rather than by "their conformity to the national prejudices" or by "their accordance with set standards of niceness and propriety."

Undoubtedly, the aesthetic disposition underlying modernism expanded the range of artistic practices, clearing the way for the most extraordinary achievements of abstract, nonobjective, and surrealist art. Yet the capacity to divorce aesthetic style from moral content has also been used by a class of people who attach themselves to the art scene so as to set themselves off from the common herd. These people speak the language of aestheticism to distinguish themselves, as those who are in the know, sophisticated, modern, hip, from everyone else, who is out of it, philistine, old-fashioned, square. Typical of this smug, cool attitude is Kardon's characterization of Mapplethorpe as a "cunning and urbane humorist" when she discusses his *Man in Polyester Suit* (1981), a photograph that frames the crotch area of a man's suit with his enormous penis exposed.

What I am calling the aesthetic disposition has also given rise to a new kind of academicism, a formalist and formulaic approach to art that can justify practically anything on aesthetic grounds alone. Kardon once again provides us with a good example in her catalogue essay, where she strains to head off moral objections to Mapplethorpe's portraits of black nude men by instructing us to notice that

> the scenes appear to be distilled from real life. When elevated to unnatural innocence, they create a frisson between the licentious subject of the photograph and its formal qualities that purifies, even cancels, the prurient elements. This dialectic is underlined further by Mapplethorpe's use of the most intense white and densest blacks. Depicting blatant sexuality in pristine photographic language infuses these works with enormous impact and energy; the contrast between the subject and its manner of presentation allows the viewer the option of being a voyeur or connoisseur.

The labored and increasingly silly claims that people like Kardon are forced to make when they attempt to aestheticize sexually charged material suggest that this once vital component of modernist aesthetics is wearing thin. Its utter exhaustion, however, becomes hard to deny when it is used to make claims about the artistic merit of what even Mapplethorpe called his "pornographic art." The time has come, then, to ask what it can possibly mean to savor the aesthetic value in the "centrality of the forearm" in an image of startling sexual violence, or to appreciate the beauty of a "picture of a guy with his finger up a cock." From the perspective of the aesthetic disposition, Mapplethorpe's graphic photographs of extremely perverse sexual practices can succeed as art only insofar as he manages to transform his subjects—who are not posed models—from actual people violating their own and each other's dignity and integrity into a beautiful array of forms.

By pushing the modernist convention of splitting morality apart from aesthetics to its outermost limits, Mapplethorpe depends on our willingness to be progressive and cosmopolitan, on our much-vaunted capacity to short-circuit our moral response in favor of our aesthetic response. The possibility of such appreciation, then, can only mean that we are now so sophisticated that we can appreciate violence, brutality, degradation, and perversity on aesthetic grounds alone. By these lights, only a cynical, callous, or terribly naive person could assume the morally neutral stance of liberal detachment of Richard Marshall, the organizer of the Whitney exhibition, who wrote in his catalogue essay that Mapplethorpe wanted "to instill through his photographs dignity and beauty to a subject that was outside the accepted norms of behavior."

A different, yet related, argument commonly made on behalf of Mapplethorpe's unflinching chronicles of life at the baths emphasizes not the aesthetic value of these pictures, but rather their significance as realist depictions of human experience. This kind of argument, too, can be traced back to the all-out attack on the genteel tradition that took shape at the beginning of this century. The radical position that a work of art be judged not for its moral lessons but as a work of art lent considerable prestige to the reputations of an emerging group of realist novelists—most notably, Theodore Dreiser—whose books broke new ground by detailing all aspects of the private lives of the lower classes, even prostitutes, in a frank and unsentimental style. And modernist literature soon proved a similarly receptive arena for the realist position, most significantly when Judge John Woolsey explained away the "extreme vulgarity" and "obscenity" of certain passages in *Ulysses* by arguing that such language was appropriate to the characters being depicted. Woolsey lauded *Ulysses* as a "true portrait of the lower middle class" and praised Joyce's innovative stream-of-consciousness technique as proof of his "sincerity and his honest effort to show exactly how the minds of his characters operate."

Like the aesthetic disposition, the realist approach to art has become so elastic that it is now used to justify virtually anything in the name of art. In a *New York Times* letter to the editor concerning the Mapplethorpe controversy, Veronica Vera, a model who "collaborated" with Mapplethorpe to produce sexually explicit images of herself, presented this position in its contemporary

guise. Vera asserts that since "Robert practiced S/M in his personal life," it should naturally be considered a "legitimate theme in his work." Such reasoning reveals the mimetic fallacy at the bottom of the realist stance: Art merely records personal experiences rather than transforms them into something larger and deeper so as to deserve a legitimate claim on public attention. But Vera takes the mimetic fallacy one step further. She transforms what was essentially an aesthetic premise into a program for therapeutic self-realization. By making art out of the sadomasochistic practices that were part of his "personal life," Vera informs us, "Robert accepted them as a valid part of his evolution as a human being." Again, let us recall that these pictures include not only images of leather-clad men bound in chains and shackled to each other, master-slave style, whose tiresome predictability shows not the endless variety of personal sexual experiences, but rather an overeagerness to conform to rigid sadomasochistic stereotypes. When Mapplethorpe includes more extravagant curios from the record of his "evolution as a human being," they reveal a cruel sensibility that relishes the spectacle of human beings turned into living fetishes, like the photograph *Joe* (1978), in which a man is completely encased from head to toe in a black rubber bodysuit that provides no openings for his eyes or nose, and only a thin air tube where the mouth is supposed to be. After praising Mapplethorpe for his "courage" in making precisely this kind of image, Vera lays out the supposed emancipatory promise of these pictures: "I see them as debunking the whole idea of pornography—helping society to get rid of that self-hating concept that ghettoizes sex, that implies that some parts of our sexuality are too unspeakable to mention, too private to be public—and that this is all part of some law that decent people do not question."

Proponents of the realist position, like proponents of the aesthetic disposition, then, refuse to make moral judgments about the subject matter being depicted. Whereas advocates of aestheticism have relegated moral concerns to the laughable realm of the Jesse Helms–puritan, proponents of realism skirt any moral complexity by asserting that all human experience is "valid." In contrast to those art professionals whose very identity hinges on their alleged capacity to make aesthetic pronouncements, realists like Vera believe that judgments—aesthetic and moral—are merely arbitrary exercises in power. "Beauty really is in the eye of the beholder," as Vera put it, and it is easy to imagine her accusing rejoinder to anyone willing to hazard a judgment, "Who are you to judge?" In place of reasoned judgment and public debate, defenders of the most violent aspects of Mapplethorpe's work have offered up a radically therapeutic defense, involving nothing less than an entirely reconditioned self. As the art critic Kay Larson declared in her essay in the Kardon catalogue, "By returning to a primal state of desire, the sublimated self releases itself from bondage and acquires a new, consciously forged identity, perhaps in consort with a group of like-minded people." From this perspective, the distinction between public and private, too, can be nothing but an arbitrary construct, bereft of any claim to legitimacy; thus one always hears the knee-jerk dismissal of those who cherish privacy as people who are unhealthy, sexually repressed, or prudish. But advocates of this position, who make a cult of exposure, profoundly misunderstand the fundamental and indispensable function of privacy in all times and for all societies. Privacy serves as a social container for fragile bodily experiences that are liable to be degraded or dehumanized if they are indiscriminately flooded with light.

Rather than uncritically accepting that transgressive actions are just another road to self-realization, we might want to question what a person really risks when he or she pushes through the socially accepted boundary between desire and the forbidden. To answer this question is to answer what it would feel like to live in a world where the concept of obscenity has vanished, where people are no longer accorded the protection of cultural conventions such as privacy, modesty, and shame. Such conventions set the limits not only to what can be known, seen, or heard about another person, but also to what can be *done* to that person. From this perspective, violent sexual encounters between strangers are not the "last frontier of self-liberation and freedom," as Larson claims was Mapplethorpe's belief. Rather, as the pictures tell us, sexual anonymity can breed viciousness and terror, in that it reduces people to the status of things; and things, by definition, are not accorded respect or tenderness. The price one pays for a life overly absorbed in the activities on the other side of the border is what Milan Kundera has called the "unbearable lightness of being"—the condition in which a person's life can never gain ballast or meaning. To claim that the public display of images of violent sex are somehow therapeutic only confirms what was a commonplace in nineteenth-century obscenity law: "Familiarity with obscenity blunts the sensibility, depraves good taste, and perverts the judgment." Constant commerce with unseemly material ultimately inures people to its indecency, giving rise to a world that is increasingly ugly, callous, and insensitive—a world that is shameless in the literal sense that nothing is considered sacred or worthy of awe or reverence.

To accept the contemporary realist position as a compelling justification for Mapplethorpe's pictures of degradation is to accept an essentially weightless approach to life that has so leveled the quality of experience that nothing is recognized as so personal or delicate or precious or fragile that it must be sheltered in the realm of intimacy. The moral coarseness implicit in the realist stance is shared by the aesthetic disposition, which depends on our willingness to find aesthetic value in images of violent sex rather than on our moral response to recoil in horror and disgust. At a time when these are the prevailing terms of discourse, it is surprising to find an influential art critic defending these sadomasochistic pictures precisely in terms of their moral significance. Yet an essay that accompanied Mapplethorpe's Whitney exhibition by Ingrid Sischy, who was then the editor of *Artforum* and is now the editor of *Interview,* took the moral and, by her lights, political implications of these disturbing pictures absolutely seriously, to the virtual exclusion of the work's aesthetic dimension.

Superficially, Sischy's brand of sociological criticism shares a great deal with the realist argument. She, too, celebrates Mapplethorpe as an "outlaw," "taboo breaker," exposer of "dirty secrets," a heroic bringer of light. But Sischy does not simply support his images as a means of "debunking pornography" or encouraging sexual liberation. Instead, she values Mapplethorpe, in part, for his treatment of homosexuality, women body-builders, and "people of color" because such subjects had previously been "de-emphasized, excluded altogether, or made shameful," and have been "short-changed" by "art history." What Sischy finds so significant in these pictures is the way they "gut clichés, transgress borders, have an undeniable chic, and show a casting system in which it seems there's only room for the superbody." The inclusion of the previously excluded, for Sischy, makes Mapplethorpe important as a radical subversive, since from the sociological perspective, the mere inclusion of the excluded—in itself a breaking of taboos—is a politically charged artistic act.

More than anything else, it is Mapplethorpe's spirit of transgression that defines his status as an artist—"what makes his art perfect for its time." Indeed, Sischy asserts that Mapplethorpe captured his moment in much the same way that the Cubists had captured theirs. "You can see and feel in [the Cubists'] dissolution of perspective the breaking apart of old views," explained Sischy. "Mapplethorpe is one of those artists whose work will define the past two decades, which have had a similar dynamic of change."

Sischy's lofty evaluation of Mapplethorpe's reputation as an artist, then, rests not on any aesthetic achievement, but rather on the work's ability to become emblematic of its particular historical time. And, as she later makes clear, the way a work best captures its moment is in its explicit social and political content. At the end of her piece, she explains that because of the AIDS crisis, she feels an urgency that "has to do with memory and with freedom," and that this urgency determined her choice to emphasize "that part of [Mapplethorpe's] work which is a record of our civil battles, and an expression of our civil rights." Here she is speaking directly of the pictures that document life at the furthest reaches of sexual experience, including a two-panel, before-and-after picture of a man's pubic region, which shows his genitals protruding from three openings in a contraption that resembles a stockade or a guillotine. "This is work that is ultimately about no cover-up, no censorship, no shameful secrets, no burial of what should be seen and what must be remembered."

After detailing the contents of Mapplethorpe's "most fearful-looking pictures," Sischy tells us of her initial reaction, providing one of her only descriptions of what it feels like to be in the presence of this work: "When these pictures first appeared there were shivers and most often people turned away, myself included." She confesses, "I have wanted to look at them a lot lately. They are still tough to see but they are masterpieces and really matter." In disclosing what makes these pictures "masterpieces," she singles out their debunking function, which once again seems to put her in the realist camp: "Their revolt against the idea of the sexual secret is epic."

Yet this is where she parts company with the realists. Instead of making the expected claim about the liberating potential of such photographs that would ordinarily come at this point in the realist argument, Sischy makes a striking innovation in keeping with her sociological perspective: She values these photographs because they serve as potent signs of the victimization of homosexuals at the hands of repressive, heterosexual society. Just as she had earlier praised exposure as a corrective to clichéd thinking about gender and racial stereotypes, she applauds these chronicles of violent sex between "consenting" participants for their power to rid individual homosexuals of guilt and to reveal to heterosexual society the terrible damage that the repression of homosexuality has wrought.

According to Sischy, homosexuals have been victimized in at least two ways. First, with the outbreak of AIDS, they have been wrongly stigmatized for the spread of the disease—indeed the ignorant and mean-spirited have leapt to the conclusion that homosexual practices are the cause of AIDS rather than one means

of transmitting a disease whose cause remains unknown. The importance of the sadomasochistic pictures in this context, for Sischy, lies in their power to "tap and provoke that old tyrannical nonsense of a punitive system ruled by the gods—with supposed consequences which are said to be brought on when you decide for yourself what is right and wrong to do with your own body." The culprit responsible for the confusion about AIDS, according to Sischy, is secrecy: "Sex has been so cloaked in mystery, secrecy, and shame, so used and abused by houses of worship—and their extensions, houses of guilt—that when it is brought into the light it's hard to have clarity." For reasons that Sischy fails to make clear, she believes these pictures, by bringing sadomasochistic homosexual practices out into the open, will not only perform the therapeutic task of alleviating homosexual guilt, but will also somehow make it clear that the connection between homosexuality and AIDS is coincidental and not causal.

The second and even more important instance of victimization that these photographs expose, according to Sischy, is the deep psychic harm that homosexuals have suffered because society has forced them to keep the truth of their sexuality in hiding. Expanding on the central premise of the cult of exposure—that secrecy always produces psychological and social pathologies—Sischy hazards the highly dubious claim that the extreme sexual practices that flourished in the gay bathhouses during the 1970s were the inevitable consequence of social repression. This claim—which is the cornerstone of her sociological analysis—betrays a rather shallow understanding of human existence, which does not take account of the utter intractability of perverse longings and destructive urges, no matter how much light is flooded into dark places, or how open the border between taboo and desire becomes. Nor does her simplistic rendering of repression capture the complicated interplay between society and the individual, in that she casually depicts anyone who breaks with social conventions not as a nonconformist or rugged individualist, but rather as a hapless victim of a monolithic, repressive system. Yet it is this one-dimensional perspective that leads Sischy to assert that the real value of Mapplethorpe's "frightening pictures [is that they] bear urgent witness":

> To look at Mapplethorpe's pictures that appear so felonious is to be conscious that a world in which a sexual life has to remain secret ... has to affect in some way the sense of self of those who feel so unprotected that they have to hide. It is to be conscious of the terrible loss you feel when you don't experience safety, when this leads you to furtiveness, and to the association of your desire with illicitness. It is to be conscious that this theatre of criminalism was staged in the context of a culture that forced the homosexual world into secrecy to avoid punishment, forced it to create one place at least where it could control power and powerlessness. It is to be conscious of what all this does to your sense of the possibility of intimacy—it hurts it. It is to be conscious of how much it meant to human dignity to say, as we did in the gay liberation movement that had already begun—no more dirty secrets, no more hiding.

Thus, the sociological stance that takes seriously the moral content of art ends up promoting the exposure of any image—no matter how violent or sensational—because it allegedly teaches a moral lesson. Implicit in this position is the belief that once good people know that evil is being concealed they will act to change it. This particular doctrine of exposure has its roots not in aesthetic discourse at all, but rather in social reform, and it has been employed by abolitionists and sex reformers in the nineteenth century as well as in our own time by political groups such as Amnesty International and, more exploitatively, by television shows such as "60 Minutes." That we are now supposed to appreciate documents of exposure as art is truly an unexpected outcome of the aesthetic battle waged against puritans and philistines for the past ninety years, which, more than anything else, was dedicated to freeing art from what was felt to be the deadweight of didacticism.

That these chronicles of sexual horrors came to be appreciated as morality tales was, ironically, possible only because of the victories won in that battle. It was the divorce between aesthetic and moral judgment—both in its realist and aestheticized versions—that allowed what had previously been considered obscene to appear in public in the first place. And as the boundaries of acceptable display continued to be contested, the line between art and obscenity became increasingly blurred, thereby allowing more and more questionable material into our common world. To her credit, Sischy sensed the bankruptcy of the aesthetic and liberationist stances when it came to Mapplethorpe's "frightening pictures." She could not ignore their terribly upsetting subject matter, which led her to defend them—surprisingly—on moral grounds. So we have come full circle: The split between moral and aesthetic judgment that evolved in order to expand the range of art eventually allowed for the appearance in public of virtually anything in the name of art. Yet representations of some things are so disturbing that they can still evoke cries of moral outrage, even from people within the contemporary art world who, instead of condemning them

as obscene and therefore unfit to be seen, use their response of moral indignation to justify the work as a document of victimization.

Thus, Sischy's claim that these pictures bear urgent witness unwittingly reduces Mapplethorpe's work to the status of muckraking journalism—so completely has any aesthetic response been obliterated in the name of didacticism. Moreover, it is extremely difficult, as Sischy's awkward though sincere effort shows, to successfully draft Mapplethorpe's pictures of unruly sex into the service of social reform. Sischy herself quotes Mapplethorpe explaining his "sex pictures" as an attempt to recreate "that feeling in the stomach" that he first experienced when he haunted porn shops on 42nd Street as a youth:

> A kid gets a certain kind of reaction, which of course once you've been exposed to everything you don't get.... I thought if I could somehow bring that element into art, if I could somehow retain that feeling, I would be doing something that was uniquely my own.

It takes an enormous leap of faith to understand Mapplethorpe's self-avowed project of evoking shame as a stimulus for social reform rather than as a last-ditch attempt to titillate his own and other people's thoroughly jaded appetites. Mapplethorpe's "theatre of criminalism" is not Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin;* his photographs document the steamy underworld in which he willingly participated. No doubt he would have found Sischy's sociological interpretation of that world condescending and moralizing, if not downright paternalistic.

The question of the moral and/or political message of Mapplethorpe's art also appears in Kardon's and Larson's essays when they discuss whether the pictures of black nude men are liberating or bigoted. That this set of concerns has made its way into essays that are not written primarily from a sociological standpoint shows to what extent Sischy's brand of criticism is taking hold in the art world. Given the moral coarseness of the realist and aesthetic positions, this is not necessarily an unwelcome development. Yet by fixating on the moral and political lessons of the subject matter, such critics in the end do not take Mapplethorpe seriously as an artist. If someone valued Delacroix's paintings of exotic places only for what they tell us about orientalism, or praised Manet's *Olympia* exclusively as a document in the history of the repression of women, most people would say such judgments deeply misunderstand and deform the great accomplishments of these artists. Such talk would undoubtedly be dismissed as philistine. Yet advocates of the sociological stance run precisely this risk the more they promote art for didactic reasons alone. That so much recent talk about photo-derived and installation art is single-mindedly sociological suggests either that many art critics today are so obsessed with political questions that they are blinded to the art before them—or that some artists (and I would include Mapplethorpe's photographs of violent sex here) are failing to maintain the necessary vital tension between moral vision and aesthetic practice that distinguishes art from muckraking journalism or fashion photography.

Toward the end of her essay, Sischy addresses two common criticisms of Mapplethorpe's work. To the objection that the work is "disgusting," and therefore pornographic, Sischy cites the verdict of a pornographer, who told her that he did not like Mapplethorpe's work because it was "so personal," which, for her, settled the matter. (One is left wondering why a pornographer's judgment on such questions should carry any weight, since his choice of trade obviously means that he is incapable of recognizing the disgusting.) To the objection that the work is "'fashionable'—too polished, too aestheticized," she responds: "Fashionability has been one of his biggest crossover instruments and is among his sharpest devices. By making his subjects so fashionable, he makes knowledge of them fashionable instead of something dirty." Sischy's easy acceptance of this charge again suggests that she does not take Mapplethorpe very seriously as an artist: To make something "fashionable" guarantees that it most definitely will not be taken seriously, that it will be relegated to that fickle realm of "what's hot and what's not," and consequently, that it will be trivialized and swiftly forgotten.

Sischy's defense of the "fashionability" of Mapplethorpe's art is perfectly in line with her other claims: that his work is "perfect for its time" and that it is important because it deals with the experience of the previously excluded (the current race/gender/sexual preference mantra). These judgments are perhaps fitting for the editor of *Interview,* a magazine devoted to fashion, celebrities, conspicuous consumption, and all things of the present moment. While such ephemera certainly flood our culture, it is precisely their fleeting and insubstantial nature that distinguishes them from art. Sischy's desire to do away with any distinction between the capricious world of fashion and the durable world of culture, like her willingness to treat art in functional terms as a handmaiden to politics, betrays an extremely impoverished notion of art and its relation to culture. The barrenness of this formulation becomes painfully apparent when we compare it to

Hannah Arendt's commodious understanding of these matters. As Arendt has observed, art, because it exists independently of all utilitarian and functional references, is the only thing that endures, the only thing that outlasts the people who made it. From this perspective, art is an inheritance passed on to future generations, a treasure that links the people of the past with those of the present, thereby making a home out of the earth and a durable world for the sake of posterity. Culture, as Arendt so aptly put it, is the "attitude that knows how to take care and preserve and admire the things of the world."

For those of us who want to take care and preserve and admire the things of this world, a small step in that direction is to be concerned about what we as a society permit to appear in our common space. This, in part, means moving the debate about obscenity beyond the current stalemate that ritualistically pits rebel artists against moralizing censors. It would mean recognizing that things that are personal and fragile require the protection of the private realm and that the public arena can only be home to those things that are large enough to deserve widespread attention and sturdy enough to withstand extended scrutiny. It would be to know, finally, that the cost of the indiscriminate display of private experiences by such different agencies of exposure as invasive journalism, television talk shows, public discussions of sexual hygiene, obscene art, and pornographic movies is a common world that is not only uncivil and ugly but also trivial and weightless. □

The Beautiful Decadence of Robert Mapplethorpe: A Response to Rochelle Gurstein

Camille Paglia

Rochelle Gurstein is absolutely correct in her diagnosis of the ineptitude, sanctimony, and crass politicizing of last year's campaign by liberals and activists on behalf of Robert Mapplethorpe. However, I disagree with her in her negative assessment of Mapplethorpe's talent and cultural significance. In this essay, I will comment on Gurstein's vigorous critique and give my own view of Mapplethorpe, whom I consider my spiritual brother.

First of all, the struggle between radical or avant-garde artists and writers against a conservative establishment does not, as Gurstein says, date from the close of the nineteenth century. It is the inner dynamic of Romanticism itself, a movement that began over two hundred years ago and still has not run its course. We see this pattern of cultural combat in the abortive public career of the Marquis de Sade, whose writings were banned, or in the younger English High Romantic poets, who died in exile. It is in the official judicial censoring of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* and in the public outcry over Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads,* and Oscar Wilde's homoerotic *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* In the visual arts, the battle in Paris between bohemian painters and the old-guard Salon juries was formalized by the middle of the nineteenth century, although the Romantic desire to affront and scandalize is visible as early as 1826, in Delacroix's lushly pornographic *Death of Sardanapalus.*

Gurstein's curt denial that Mapplethorpe's sado-masochistic photos shock in the manner of Manet's notorious *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) seems to me unsupported and unpersuasive. Manet's innovations in that painting, it can be argued, are precisely parallel to Mapplethorpe's. While rosy nudity was permissible in academic Salon paintings of Greek and Roman themes, the flat, sallow flesh tones of Manet's nude female picnicker disturbed first viewers with a harsh contemporary realism and immediacy. There is no attempt to soften or idealize. This sexual flesh is frankly available and unromanticized. The casual air with which Manet juxtaposes brazen open-air nudity with the raffish workaday costume of the two young intellectuals, lost in discourse, is exactly the tone of many of Mapplethorpe's photos, where libertines pose in relaxed moods amid

Camille Paglia is professor of humanities at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She is the author of Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson *(Yale University Press, 1990; Vintage Books, 1991).*

the bizarre discontinuities of their sexual underworld. The original shock of Manet's painting is surely reproduced, with the greater explicitness of our age, in Mapplethorpe's extraordinary photograph *Man in Polyester Suit,* with its large black penis poking from an otherwise fully clothed torso. Finally, Manet goaded respectable sensibilities by the cool, appraising look on the face of his nude woman, who, like his self-possessed courtesan Olympia, meets our eyes without apology or embarrassment. She is practical, efficient, a bawdy woman of the world who knows her market value. She has, I submit, the same unsentimental sexual efficiency of Mapplethorpe's jaunty, jaded sadomasochists.

Sadomasochism is a sacred cult, a pagan religion that reveals the dark secrets of nature. The bondage of sadomasochism expresses our own bondage by the body, our subservience to its brute laws, concealed by our myths of romantic love.

I agree with Gurstein that the defense of Mapplethorpe piously and sometimes hysterically invoked the terminology of old avant-garde combat in a way no longer applicable to a society that, as she says, "now tolerates and even encourages explicit images and inordinate amounts of talk about sex." The avant-garde tradition was terminated in the sixties by pop art, which closed the gap between high and low culture. The art world since then has, in my view, sunk into naked hucksterism and puerile mini-fads and become a toy-train rat race of mediocrity and irrelevance. American creative energy is flowing instead into popular culture, which is sweeping the world. Mapplethorpe's distinction is that he revived the idea of the avant-garde at a moment when it seemed buried forever. He showed that there are still deep cultural taboos for the serious artist to expose. In this respect, he has nothing in common with people like Karen Finley and Holly Hughes, who pretend to be avant-garde but who are just peddling tired twenty-year-old feminist clichés.

Gurstein asks why, if "the forces of reaction" were as threatening as some liberals claim, there were no conservative protests prior to the Mapplethorpe show at the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington. America, unlike England and France, suffers from a split between its cultural and political capitals. What goes on in small, private galleries or even the Whitney Museum in New York is not likely to register on the national political radar screen. Most people in the country have a low opinion of New York City and don't give a hoot about what's going on there—a fact to which arrogant Manhattanites, inside and outside the media, are completely oblivious. New York, like San Francisco and Los Angeles, occupies its own mental zone.

As for the Mapplethorpe show at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, I can speak to that, since I attended it. First of all, the Institute is on the grounds of a private academic institution, the University of Pennsylvania. Second, it is very difficult to find, recessed like a burrow at the edge of a huge, crowded, leafy quadrangle. The hidden, removed placement of the show seemed to fit it exactly. I had a feeling of entering Pompeii's Villa of the Mysteries. It was a descent to the nether realm, from which one emerged blinking in the daylight.

The small, informal Institute of Contemporary Art was the ideal setting for Mapplethorpe's photographs. The majestic Corcoran Gallery, one block from the White House, was not. Official Washington, whether we like it or not, is the nation's public stage, the site of its historical identity and highest political values. Visitors—citizens or foreigners—know perfectly well they are touring a theater set. Mapplethorpe was an avant-garde outsider, a sexual outlaw, a night rider. It dilutes him to enshrine him in a national landmark. For me, one of the supreme moments in contemporary art was the night protest that projected slides of Mapplethorpe's pictures against the wall of the Corcoran. There is Mapplethorpe's essence, his spectral identity as a suffering Romantic artist forever outside the pale. The demonstration ingeniously replayed, without knowing it, the cinema of Blake's great poem "London," where solitary, excluded voices smear or mar the cold stone walls of society's institutions.

Let me offer an analogy from my own life. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, that grand Greek temple dominating the city's sightlines from river and parkway, has most graciously allowed photographers from various magazines to take my picture in its galleries. When *Playboy* recently asked about possible settings for a photo shoot, I automatically suggested the museum. The museum's public relations department agreed as usual but then, a day later, called the magazine to say it had been overruled from above. *Playboy* was somewhat miffed to be denied access, but I, after an initial moment of surprise, was pleased, even exhilarated. Both *Playboy* and the Philadelphia Museum of Art gain by their mutual exclusion. Each is an American institution with its own

tradition and destiny. A strong, vigorous society has the will and ability to draw lines, to make demarcations, to set limits. Identity thrives by conflict and opposition.

Gurstein next says "most" of Mapplethorpe's photographs are "unexceptional" and fall within the "mainstream" of contemporary art. She cites as an example his "high-contrast, artsy" portraits of celebrities, which she rightly says would be at home in "tony magazines" such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair.* But chic, upscale magazines are hardly the "mainstream" of contemporary art, which likes to adopt hip gestures of funky pseudo-leftism. Later, Gurstein again dismisses this important element of Mapplethorpe's photos: "To make something 'fashionable' guarantees that it most definitely will not be taken seriously." I disagree. The fashionable style has its own powerful history in Western, as in Chinese and Japanese, art. It is glossy, artificial, sophisticated, the aristocratic pose of "late" or decadent phases of style. We see it in bas-reliefs of New Kingdom Egypt, in Hellenistic sculpture, in Roman imperial busts, in the Mannerist paintings of Bronzino, Pontormo, and El Greco, in the stylized portraits of Ingres, Romaine Brooks, and Tamara de Lempicka.

Mapplethorpe has a long and varied artistic lineage. Like me, he was an admirer of Andy Warhol, whose silver-lined Factory, overflowing with tramps, studs, transvestites, and Superstars I regarded, from the far distance of an upstate New York college, as my spiritual home in the sixties. Warhol, Mapplethorpe, and I were born and raised Catholic. The Warhol cult of celebrity is a transposition of Catholic iconography, with gilded saints become glittering stars. I see this erotic process of modern idolatry as an eruption of Catholicism's ancient, latent paganism.

Gurstein dismisses Mapplethorpe's flower photographs as, to use my word, conventional. I heartily concur. I find the flower pictures insipid, formulaic, and uninspired, compared to Georgia O'Keeffe's menacingly turgid and authentically sexual studies of the same theme. Mapplethorpe is too timid here. For consistency with his other work, he should have given us real *fleurs du mal,* poison flowers straight out of Joris-Karl Huysmans's *Against Nature,* with its seething, primeval hothouse garden. Huysmans, with his peculiar, overripe French, successfully creates in words the biomorphic analogies that Mapplethorpe only reaches for. The soft, shapely penises of Mapplethorpe's photos are far more fully seen and rendered as organic presences than his effete, too-pretty flowers, which wouldn't turn a hair in Phyllis Schlafly's kitchen.

Gurstein raises the question of "violent sex" in Mapplethorpe's photos and laments the fact that "stark records of sexual violence have come to qualify as art."



But is it art? Mapplethorpe's Joe *(1978) subverts a traditional art-school pose and leaves viewers little breathing room.*

But very few of the photos do in fact directly depict such violence, which is in any case central to the tradition of Christian art, with its bloody, seminude, tortured saints in transports of martyrdom. Crucifixes in Mediterranean and Mexican Catholicism have a sensual, writhing, polychrome violence that Mapplethorpe, with his calm, austere black and white, never came near. In short, Mapplethorpe's photos cannot be dismissed on the grounds of violence alone.

However, Gurstein rightly showers contempt on the efforts by "experts" at the Cincinnati trial to laud things like "the centrality of the forearm" in a Mapplethorpe photo of one man "fisting" another. I agree that such obtuse attempts to aestheticize intentionally shocking content are, as Gurstein puts it, "insults to common sense." It injures Mapplethorpe to whitewash him, to deny his cunningly perverse motives, to turn him into a gay Norman Rockwell. I have been heavily influenced by the art-for-art's-sake tradition, created by Gautier and descending through Walter Pater to Oscar Wilde. But pure aestheticism of the abstract-tending, Whistler kind has only a limited application to Mapplethorpe, who more closely resembles Baudelaire in his conscious fusion of cool, classical form and squalid, decadent, in-your-face content. Mapplethorpe's offhand comment about the beauty of his photo of "a guy with a finger up a cock" should be taken with a grain of salt. As my mentor Harold Bloom has intricately demonstrated, artists cannot be trusted in remarks about their own work or that of their rivals or predecessors.

Such statements are merely strategies in a larger game.

The obsequiousness of amnesiac formalism has stripped Mapplethorpe of his ultimate meanings. We must frankly face the mutilations and horrors in Mapplethorpe's sexual world and stop trying to blandly argue them away as fun and frolics of "an alternative lifestyle." His grim sadomasochists are not lovable, boppy Venice Beach eccentrics on roller skates. Gurstein correctly speaks of the "brutality" and "degradation" in Mapplethorpe's pictures. Degradation is at the heart of his eroticism. To deny the degradation in the photos of one man urinating into the mouth of another is to remove all their erotic charge. Such acts have never been sanctioned in any culture. This is why they are now, and will remain, radical.

It is foolish and naive to claim, as has repeatedly been done, that the discomforting or painful features of Mapplethorpe's sexual tastes reflect the unjust oppression of a homophobic society. This reduces Mapplethorpe's work to a tedious, one-issue, social-welfare activism; it imprisons him in the contemporary; it destroys him as an artist. I would argue, on the contrary, that the stringent sexual repressions and yet high sensory stimulation of Catholicism gave Robert Mapplethorpe his special vision; these tensions and limitations allowed him to look directly into universal sexual reality. He saw and accepted the cruelty and aggression in our animal nature, our unevolved link with the pagan and primeval past. Mapplethorpe was not a liberal. Sadomasochism is not liberal. It is rigorously hierarchical and coldly ritualistic. In my analysis of history, sadomasochism always returns when moral codes and social institutions weaken. It returns because it is our deepest nature. Mapplethorpe's liberal supporters do not understand him. His work is a scandal to all their progressive humanitarian ideals.

Gurstein, more honestly than Mapplethorpe's apologists, confronts the obvious sexual facts of the photographs: human beings reduced to "the status of things" (as, I would add, in barbarous prehistory), turned into "living fetishes," like the man half-mummified and near-asphyxiated in a sealed black rubber bodysuit. The desolate sexual personae of these horror-show scenarios quest for metaphysical truth. Mere physical gratification is no longer the issue. Sadomasochism is a sacred cult, a pagan religion that reveals the dark secrets of nature. The bondage of sadomasochism expresses our own bondage by the body, our subservience to its brute laws, concealed by our myths of romantic love. Mapplethorpe's work, like Swinburne's, demolishes the liberal worldview, with its optimistic faith in benevolent, egalitarian social and sexual relationships.

Gurstein correctly exposes the indulgent, sentimental nonsense that has been said and written about Robert Mapplethorpe. The intrusion of strident liberal politics into the assessment of Mapplethorpe has done a great disservice to this remarkable artist. I was outraged, for example, at an early "Nightline" program on the controversy in which the ABC correspondent ostentatiously posed in a room lined with propped-up examples of Mapplethorpe's photos of black men. It was a blatantly biased attempt to suggest that Jesse Helms's opposition to Mapplethorpe was simply racially motivated. I continued to be outraged, as weeks and then months passed, by the suppression in sympathetic media reports of the most horrific of Mapplethorpe's pictures. Gurstein describes one of them as a "before-and-after picture" of a man's genitals, trapped and protruding from three holes in a wooden plank shaped like a "guillotine." She neglects to say that blood is spattered like paint all over it. When I first saw this grisly, almost incomprehensible photograph in Philadelphia, I was stunned and overwhelmed. It seemed to symbolize everything I had found in the turbulent sexual history of mankind and tried to express in my own book. Mapplethorpe, in his life and his work, shows the harsh truths faced by our sixties generation, whose quest for sexual freedom ended in disaster. It is nature, not society, that is our greatest oppressor.

I have loved Robert Mapplethorpe ever since I saw his bleak, half-transvestite portrait of Patti Smith, posing like an anorexic Frank Sinatra on her first album, *Horses* (1975). I think it is one of the greatest pictures ever taken of a woman. I esteem Mapplethorpe for his learned recapitulation of the history of art, his allusions to and corruption of classic and Renaissance style. As an heir to the gay artist Tom of Finland and the German photographer Helmut Newton, he sees the hard, militant, sculptural quality of Western personality, which tends toward the imperialistic and fascist. He unites sharp-edged Apollonian form with melting Dionysian content. In his celebrations of homoerotic beauty, which is one of the most ancient and enduring inspirations of Western art, Mapplethorpe retrains our eye to see the penis and scrotum at their real size. Male genitals, except in outlandish comic orgy scenes in Greek art, have never before been so truthfully integrated into the high-art tradition. I accept Mapplethorpe as a pornographer, but for me, Donatello, Michelangelo, and Caravaggio were also pornographers. I do not think Mapplethorpe ever produced a masterpiece, but then neither did another of my favorite artists, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. I believe that, in the general emptiness of the present art world, Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs will indeed live on to eloquently represent the modern imagination at the *fin de siècle*. □

Maternal Dissent: Women and Procreation in the Mishna

Judith Hauptman

That the Talmud exempts women from having to perform a wide variety of religious rituals has provoked longstanding feminist debate. Some "rabbi-bashers" argue it signifies women are no more than chattel; others view it as compassionate recognition of the centrality and demanding nature of women's domestic role. I'd like to suggest yet another explanation: The rabbis' fear that an obligation might dangerously empower women led them to replace obligations with exemptions.

By reading the Mishna in the light of legal opinions found in Tosefta—a tannaitic text redacted a short time after the Mishna but containing material both anterior and posterior to Mishna—I hope to take a rare chance to examine the roads *not* taken: to examine the options the redactor chooses to reject. This inquiry will focus on Mishna Yevamot 6:6, a text often trotted out as evidence that the rabbis of the Talmud belittle women, in this instance by devaluing their role in procreation. I hope to show that women's exemption from the commandment to procreate stems partly from a patriarchal desire to leave termination of a marital relationship solely in the hands of men and partly from a wish to give women greater control over their personal lives.

The broad concern of Tractate Yevamot is how to continue the line of a man who died childless. Woven into this discussion is a passage, Yevamot 6:6, on the obligation to procreate: A man (Hebrew, *adam*) may not desist from "*piryah* and *rivyah,*" from the act of being fruitful and multiplying, unless he already has children. The House of Shammai sets the requisite number of children at two males, but offers no scriptural text or rationale in support of this position. The House of Hillel holds that the obligation can be met by producing one male and one female child and cites Genesis 5:2, "male and female He created them," as proof, suggesting perhaps that man (and woman) imitate God in their creation of human life by producing, as He did, both males and females.

Judith Hauptman is an associate professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and coauthor of Development of the Talmudic Sugya (*University Press of America, 1988).*

The first section of this mishna thus says that a man is obliged to engage in procreative sex until he fathers two children; after having done so, he may choose to desist. What the Mishna does not explain is, desist from what? The text cannot be saying that he may unilaterally choose to terminate sexual activity with his wife because the Mishna states elsewhere (Ketubot 5:6) that he always is required to meet his conjugal obligations to her. Can it be saying that once he has the requisite number of sons and daughters he may switch to nonprocreative sex, meaning that he (or his wife) may choose to use contraceptive devices, that is, drink what the rabbis call "a sterilizing potion"? Can it be saying that if, after having sired two children, he is no longer married, he may marry a woman who is incapable of bearing children or that he may choose to stay single? Unfortunately, neither the Mishna itself, nor the talmudic interpretations, nor the commentators on the Mishna, spell out the implications of this cryptic statement.

The next section of this mishna says that if a husband and wife are still childless after ten years, the husband is not permitted to desist from attempting to procreate. It seems unreasonable that this passage requires him to keep trying to have children with the same woman, even though this is what it appears to say. More likely, he is supposed to try to have children with another woman, either by divorcing this wife and marrying someone else, or by keeping this wife and taking a second one.

The mishna further notes that if he divorces the wife who has been barren for ten years, she may marry someone else. The second husband may also live with her for ten years. That is, the onus of barrenness does not rest on her. If during any ten-year period she spontaneously aborts, the count goes back to zero. Therefore, it is not incumbent upon the second husband—nor the first—to take any action with regard to his own obligation to procreate unless ten totally unfruitful years have passed.

The last section of the mishna states explicitly what was assumed all along, namely that it is the man who is obligated to procreate, not the woman. No prooftext

is provided. This was clearly the anonymous author's position throughout. He discussed only what actions a man may take in the event that no children or two children are born, not the options available to a woman. This mishna concludes with R. Yohanan ben Baroqa's dissenting opinion that both men and women are obligated to procreate, as God says to them both in Genesis 1:28, "*pru urevu*" (be fruitful and multiply). What remains unclear is the anonymous author's rationale for exempting women from the obligation to procreate. The fact that this entire mishna resonates with references to Genesis 1 deepens the puzzle of the anonymous author's restrictive stance. From Genesis, it is clear that men and women are equally bound to populate the earth. Ironically, unlike ritual areas where exemption often leads to exclusion, here, even if a woman is exempt de jure, her de facto participation in this act is equivalent to a man's. There is yet a third voice here, that of the redactor. Although this mishna is written from the perspective of the anonymous author, the redactor subtly undermines the author's opinion, first, by leaving him without a proof-text or an observable rationale, and second, by including a dissenting opinion, together with its unusually explicit biblical support. This hints that the redactor—and the tradition in general—may view women as something more than baby incubators.

With these three questions in mind—what action may a man desist from once he has fathered two children; what action may he take if no children are born after ten years of marriage; and why did *tanna kama* exempt women from the obligation to procreate—we now turn to the parallel material in the Tosefta (Yevamot 8:46) in the hope that this other tannaitic collection, which complements and supplements the Mishna, will provide some answers. Tosefta cites the mishna's opening statement that one may desist from procreative sex only after fathering children, and then comments that a man may not live without a wife, nor a woman without a husband; that a man may not drink a sterilizing potion in order not to father more children, nor may a woman drink such a potion to prevent pregnancy; that neither man nor woman may take a spouse who is incapable of having children.

What Tosefta does not tell us is when these rules apply: Do they apply for a person's entire life, or only until he or she has children? But we can deduce an answer. If these rules are to be understood as perpetually applicable, then what does Tosefta mean earlier when it says that a man may desist from procreative sex once he already has children? Since we have already ruled out the possibility that he may abstain from sexual relations altogether—because he is required to meet his conjugal obligations to his wife—it follows that the Tosefta intends for these rules to apply only to men who have not yet fathered children. If so, then I think we have found an answer to the question of what action a man is permitted to abstain from (or take) once he already has children. According to the Tosefta, once a man has produced two children and does not wish to have any more, he may drink a sterilizing potion; if he is no longer married, he may choose a second wife who is incapable of having children; if he wishes, he need not remarry at all.

The Tosefta then provides an interesting contrast to the second section of the Mishna, saying (paragraph 5): "If he took a wife and lived with her for ten years and she did not give birth, he may not desist; rather, he must divorce her and pay the marriage settlement, for perhaps he did not merit being immortalized through her."

The Tosefta's intransigent stand here is rather puzzling. Why doesn't it recognize that there is an alternative course of action, namely to take another wife? After all, Tractate Yevamot is filled with instances in which it is assumed that a man may take more than one wife. Furthermore, the very next line of the Tosefta cites Genesis 16:3, which says that after Abraham lived for ten years in Canaan (in which time Sarah did not give birth), she gave him her handmaid as a concubine, saying (verse 2), "Perhaps I will be immortalized through her." How strange for the Tosefta to learn from Torah how long it takes to establish that a wife is barren, and even use a poignant phrase about surrogate motherhood first coined by Sarah, but still not recommend what Sarah recommended, that in these circumstances a man take another wife!

This baffling omission leads me to suppose that the Tosefta, throughout its discussion of this topic, holds that women, too, are obligated to procreate. If so, it is easy to understand why at the end of ten years he is required to divorce her and may not simply take a second wife in addition to her: She needs the freedom to fulfill her obligation to procreate with another man. I can cite two texts in support of this explanation. The first is paragraph 4 above, which states that all the restrictions placed upon men who have not yet fathered children also apply to women. The only reasonable explanation for these restrictions is that Tosefta holds that she, too, is obligated to procreate. As remarkable as this statement about men and women is, I think its egalitarian tone prevented it from being cited—even to be repudiated—in any of the later rabbinic works, such as the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. Even worse, a number of the early versions of Tosefta, in both manuscript and

(Continued on p. 94)

BOOK REVIEW

All God's Children

Stephen Seligman

The Spiritual Life of Children by Robert Coles. Houghton Mifflin, 1990, 358 pp.

Robert Coles is the leading practitioner of what he calls "the tradition of documentary psychiatry." His pioneering *Children of Crisis* series—five volumes of firsthand accounts about children's lives in contemporary America, published from the early 1960s to the late 1970s—covered the gamut from Southern blacks to migrant farm workers to the privileged children of the wealthy. Coles, who is both a pediatrician and a psychoanalyst of children, traces his initial fascination with the personal reflections of the young to his work, three decades ago, with black elementary school students who were on the front lines of the integration struggle. But he does not overlook the poignancy of private situations like that of the polio-stricken child in the 1950s who, while strapped to an iron lung, showed remarkable sympathy for the doctors who tried to treat him and for the parents who would survive him. Coles has been able to synthesize the compassion of a good doctor, the documentary acuity of his hero James Agee, the socially conscious spiritual passion of the Catholic Worker movement and its founder Dorothy Day, and the poetic temperament of his early mentor, William Carlos Williams (who was also a physician).

As a result, Coles brings mastery of both interviewing and storytelling to his material. As an interviewer, Coles mediates between his young subjects and his adult readers by bringing out the latent forthrightness and creativity of children. Under the spell of his quiet charisma, young people blossom. In *The Spiritual Life of Children,* a ten-year-old Hopi girl from New Mexico speaks contemptuously about Anglo ways. "Our People spoke to the Anglos ... but they don't listen to *us;* they listen to hear themselves.... My grandmother says they live to conquer the sky, and we live to pray to it, and you can't explain yourself to people who live to conquer—just pray for them, too."

"I wanted to ask some more questions.... Maybe God looks like a star ... maybe He looks like this planet. Maybe He's not someone like us; maybe He's hiding, and He looks different."

Rather than taking up the implicit challenge, Coles allows this thoughtful girl to proceed with her eloquent perception of an immanent but nonanthropomorphic God. She gazes skyward, spots a thundercloud—"the home of the noise"—and says: "Our God is the sky and lives wherever the sky is. Our God is the sun and the moon, too; and our God is our [the Hopi] people ... if we remember to stay here. This is where we're supposed to be, and if we leave, we lose God."

Coles has a remarkable capacity for immersing himself in the world of children while staying out of their way. He provides an atmosphere in which young informants can feel understood and appreciated. As generations of parents and child psychologists have learned, children think and speak differently than adults do, but their perceptions are neither unsophisticated nor insignificant. Coles's approach is an antidote to the condescending habit of idealizing young people's directness simply because it seems ingenuous.

In *The Spiritual Life of Children,* Coles turns his attention to a topic of great personal interest to him. Besides his long involvement with the Catholic Worker movement, he was raised by a churchgoing mother. Here, he offers accounts of children's images of God and religion that are drawn from thousands of interviews conducted with young Christians, Jews, Moslems, and agnostics from nearly every continent, although most are with Americans. At times, the sense of an ineffable divine presence is exquisite, as when Natalie, another Hopi girl, explains her sense of the sacredness of her natural world—the mesa by which she lives: "Each spirit is a soul. You can't see them, not the way you see me and I see you. But they are there—and when we go there, we sit, and they talk to us. The wind sweeps across the mesa, and [that way we know] we've been noticed and welcomed."

The vitality of such accounts supports Coles's view that religion cannot be reduced to a psychological or social function, as Freud and Marx believed. The spiritual must be understood on its own terms, as a realm of experience as basic as morality, aesthetics, or politics. For him, the religious reflections of children express the human drive to "sift and sort, and to play, first with toys and games ... then with ideas and words and images and sounds"; these youngsters are "pilgrims well aware that life is a finite journey and as anxious to make sense of it as those who are farther along in the time allotted us."

From this perspective, Coles argues against the Freudian critique of religion as mass neurosis, an infantile

Stephen Seligman is associate clinical professor of psychiatry at UCSF and is on the faculty of psychiatry at New College of California. His psychotherapy practice includes adults, children, and infants.

"illusion." While acknowledging that religion has, at times, shielded self-deception and tyranny, he views spiritual thinking in a way that reminds one of the pragmatist William James. James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* concluded that spiritual life is a fundamental human reality. "Religion, in her fullest exercise of function, is not a mere illuminator of facts elsewhere given, not a mere passion, like love, which sees things in a rosier light—it is something more—a postulator of new *facts* as well."

My own clinical work has affirmed this view, sometimes in an unexpected fashion. One former patient—call him Jonathan—began therapy at the age of three after he became uncontrollably aggressive at home and in nursery school. A year earlier, his father had been suddenly and severely disabled; he would communicate with Jonathan and his mother by shouting in sharp disapproval at their actions. Beset by guilt and anxiety, the boy unconsciously blamed himself and, through his own aggressive behavior, identified with his father's agonized outbursts. Repeated nightmares of being terrorized by Freddy Krueger, the dagger-fingered villain of *Nightmare on Elm Street,* seemed to embody the unrelenting specter of self-persecution that haunted Jonathan's inner life.

Jonathan's case fit rather neatly into the classic oedipal paradigm—an unusual occurrence these days. Following the logic of that paradigm, I expected him to recast his image of the punitive but beloved father soon after he started attending a religious school at the age of five. Would he now embrace the conventional ideal of an almighty paternal presence who could act harshly but was normally benign? The change from a preoccupation with Freddy to a relationship with God the Father would mark a decisive therapeutic advance.

But Jonathan's inventiveness defied the neat Freudian axiom that stereotypic religious thinking would emerge from traumatic neurosis. After the 1989 San Francisco earthquake, Jonathan explained to me that God's good will had prevented anyone from dying when the Bay Bridge buckled. I asked how God had intervened. He pondered for a minute; so I speculated that He had somehow held up the span long enough for everyone to get off safely. Jonathan immediately chided me: "That's silly. God isn't like a giant who just comes down and does things. He's not like a person. You don't understand," and went on to elaborate a subtle view of the importance of a spiritual being in the world.

In the face of such untutored and spontaneous originality, Freud's reductionist view of spiritual belief as a way for the young child to idealize the terrifying oedipal father seems, at best, shallow and incomplete. Intellectually alert and appealing children such as Jonathan and those whom Coles describes are not using God merely to contain their psychic pain. Like many contemporary analysts, Coles relies on an aspect of psychoanalytic method that Freud's most dogmatic followers neglected—empathic, non-directed inquiry capable of probing the inner workings of the mind.



However, Coles's own interpretation backs away from the larger questions. *The Spiritual Life of Children* is more seductive than substantive when it tries to resolve the troubling ambiguities of religious conviction. Coles's stance can yield an abundance of eloquent anecdotes, but it tends to skirt problems that anyone concerned with either children or religion should confront. For example, Mark, a twelve-year-old Seventh Day Adventist, talks about how God helps him win at track meets. In addition to not asking how God manages to pay attention to all the track meets occurring simultaneously, Coles doesn't challenge Mark's reflective but ultimately evasive responses. Are winners closer to God than losers? Is prayer really rewarded with victory? It is difficult not to feel that, at least in Mark's case, religion simply is consoling a lonely, competitive boy whose fundamentalist family offers him no alternative world view. On a political level, the association of God with personal triumph is uncomfortably close to the dangerous suggestion that might makes right.

A similar problem arises from Coles's presentation of the often subtle anthropomorphic images that Christian children use to express the "face" and "voice" of God (he notes that Islamic and Jewish children refrained from visualizing the Divine, as their faiths stipulate). According to Tommy, a fourth-grader from Boston: "My friend asked if God and Jesus look the same. The man told us they *are* the same! I wanted to ask some more questions.... Maybe God looks like a star ... maybe He looks like this planet. Maybe He's not someone like us; maybe He's hiding, and He looks different."

Such ingenuity is delightful, of course, but Coles's enthusiasm for these fantastical images offers little in the way of interpretation. Although he acknowledges that the shape of particular images varies with social class, Coles does not try to link them to his informants' everyday experiences; the reader is left wondering whether these images correspond to particular people, events, or psychological issues. Here the author is too protective of spiritual thinking, relying on his capacity to discover the depth of children's beliefs but evading the more profound questions his material raises.

Although religion cannot simply be

reduced to psychology or any other alternative discourse, it does have extra-religious meaning. Sophia, a black twelve-year-old daughter of a maid from New Orleans, drew Jesus as black, telling Coles that "white folks will discover a similar truth one day." As Coles points out, Sophia's parents' "ideas and speculations had come to inform their daughter's images [and] her God's fiercely attentive yet austere and distant posture helped her comprehend the life of poor blacks in New Orleans." Coles's analysis would have been deeper had he asked the questions about life's tragedies and social inequities that such accounts provoke. Religious images are not invalidated by asking such questions, but there is sometimes a price to pay for faith.

Beyond the charm of these children's accounts is the fact that they believe things that are neither confirmable nor disconfirmable except subjectively. To put it crudely, they often say things that aren't true. Despite the unquestionable value of faith and illusion generally, there is a risk to granting legitimacy to this approach: Once you allow the unverifiable to become the basis for authority, you may accept anything. Children who view God as a charismatic presence may be open to the appeal of other, less benign, charismatic ideas and authorities. The potential link between this kind of religiosity and the know-nothingism that increasingly pervades American culture, as well as such varied places as Eastern Europe and the Middle East, cannot be ignored.

Coles thus may be offering a seductive case for the appealing aspects of religion without interrogating his stories for the clues they may provide about a more destructive side. Since moral and political concerns have always defined his sensibility, it is surprising that his book does not examine this problem. Coles's own experience may lead him to err on the side of religion's virtues. Still, he is right to describe the spiritual domain, with all its power and dangers, as a fundamental human achievement, one secular skeptics should not dismiss. □

BOOK REVIEW

Strong Hearts, Weak Politics

Theda Skocpol

The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America by Nicholas Lemann. Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, 410 pp.

America's Misunderstood Welfare State: Persistent Myths, Enduring Realities by Theodore R. Marmor, Jerry L. Mashaw, and Philip L. Harvey. Basic Books, 1990, 268 pp.

Americans find themselves at a political impasse as the last decade of the twentieth century unfolds. The "free world" has triumphed through the implosion of the Soviet empire, yet signs of economic and social malaise mount at home. The U.S. economy is buffeted by international competition, whose strong winds preserve an ever-smaller proportion of highly skilled careers alongside an expanding number of dead-end jobs, whose wages and prospects cannot sustain families. Racial hostilities persist years after the "civil-rights revolution" was supposedly won. Everywhere, ordinary citizens are anxious about poor public schools, costly or inaccessible health care, festering crime and public disorder, and the stresses faced by families who must balance work and parenting without adequate private resources or public support.

In response, politicians avoid clear, forward-looking talk about domestic issues and—in resonance—citizens have been profoundly cynical and disillusioned about politics. Except for an occasional symbolic gesture toward anti-abortionists or opponents of affirmative action, President Bush says little about the nation's domestic problems or what government could do to address them. He and most Republicans presume that the strong international position of the United States, along with the satisfaction of more privileged Americans, can keep the presidency in their party's hands for a long time to come. Meanwhile, Republicans can use the disgust with "politics-as-usual" to chip away at bastions of Democratic electoral strength in the Congress and in many states and localities.

The Republican strategy is certainly workable for the foreseeable future—because the Democrats are also reluctant to say anything bold about domestic problems or governmental solutions. With few exceptions (such as Nebraska Senator Robert Kerrey's

Theda Skocpol is a professor of sociology at Harvard. She is author of the forthcoming Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Politics of Social Provision in the United States, 1870s–1920s *(Harvard University Press, 1992).*

plan for comprehensive national health insurance), Democrats have left unchallenged the notion that the U.S. "needs" lower taxes. While the American electorate shrinks, many opportunistic Democratic politicians are reaching for support from the same insulated suburbanites who usually vote Republican, while "traditionalists" seem locked into zero-sum symbolism that feebly gestures toward the party's threatened constituencies—by shoring up the leadership of the beleaguered labor or civil-rights movements. For now, the orientation of most Democrats remains stubbornly short-term, upholding a strategy of each-politician-for-him-or-her-self.

Perhaps, before too long, Republican dominance and the nation's deepening problems will teach those who would revitalize domestic policy a critical lesson: Only efforts within a ten-to-fifteen-year time span, akin to the one the Republican Right kept up through continual electoral defeats from 1964 to 1980, can turn things around. Broad and sustained political coalitions will need to be invigorated; liberals can no longer count on the federal courts to wage their political battles in lieu of elected legislators and chief executives. Determined politicians, willing to argue and lose and then try again, must be part of any such progressive resurgence. But we also need fresh interpretations of where American society finds itself and visions of how new public policies could move a majority of citizens toward a better future.

Nicholas Lemann in *The Promised Land,* and the team of Theodore Marmor, Jerry Mashaw, and Philip Harvey in *America's Misunderstood Welfare State* are among those trying to jumpstart progressive thinking. Their books are, arguably, the two most important recent discussions of U.S. social ills and welfare policy written from an unabashedly liberal point of view (although their arguments fundamentally differ). Both of these books offer much of value. However, their backward-looking assumptions will do little to reignite the progressive imagination.

Much of *The Promised Land* is a fascinating reconstruction of fifty years in the lives of several families who left the Mississippi Delta to migrate to the South Side of Chicago (and, in a few cases, ultimately returned to Mississippi). Through the wrenching ups and downs of these personal histories, we learn about the mechanization of cotton picking and the dissolution of the sharecropping system in the deep South; the pull of jobs in Northern cities during and just after World War II; and the subsequent concentration of lower-class blacks in urban ghettos. Meanwhile, the deindustrialization of the economy and de facto urban segregation cut off many migrants and their children from mainstream institutions in which they might prosper. While scholars knowledgeable about this great migration have quarreled with various details of Lemann's portrayal, this part of his story is told with considerable analytical skill and human sensitivity.

Democratic politicians are reaching for support from the same insulated suburbanites who usually vote Republican, while "traditionalists" seem locked into zero-sum symbolism that feebly gestures toward the party's threatened constituencies.

But *The Promised Land* also has a message about U.S. social policies; and here the book is quite muddled. Lemann recounts the emergence and demise of the War on Poverty in terms of personal rivalries among John and Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and that preeminent policy intellectual, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In the end, Lemann engages in another round of Moynihan-bashing, joining forces (from a different angle) with liberal critics who earlier attacked Moynihan for talking frankly, when he was a Johnson advisor, about the baleful impact of female-headed black families. Lemann suggests that the demise of what was a partially successful War on Poverty can be blamed on Moynihan's preoccupation with critics to his left, and on his ambitious desire to cozy up to President Nixon and the Republicans. Moynihan, bemoans Lemann, wanted to substitute cash grants for the "social service jobs that were giving blacks their main avenue of opportunity, without giving any additional jobs, education, or training that might help the poorest people to get out of the ghetto." Moynihan supposedly made this choice because he wanted to undercut the base of his critics who could never forgive his famous comments about the black family.

Some may find this insiderish narrative fascinating, but I found it very thin fare. Whatever Moynihan's deeds and motivations, there were deeper forces in American society and politics that came together from the 1960s to the 1980s to create a backlash, not only against the War on Poverty itself, but also against almost every government effort to aid poor citizens with services, cash, or in-kind benefits such as food stamps. In Lemann's book, we barely glimpse conservative attacks on the welfare state, working-class white antagonisms toward affirmative-action programs, or the rise of Reaganism from the ashes of the Great Society, the bungled Vietnam War, and the economic stagflation of the 1970s. Lemann's account of antipoverty policy as a personal drama does not open a wider window onto a changing America as does his account of the black migrants to Chicago.

Given this failing, it is perhaps not surprising that Lemann's sole policy prescription is a new and bigger federal War on Poverty. Lemann hopes that *The Promised Land* will produce moral outrage among educated Americans and rekindle "a sense of righteous purpose" among the relatively privileged to aid the ghetto poor. Although he shows that previous federal programs had little impact on the poorest urban blacks and that those who got ahead did so by escaping from the ghettos, he does not seem to realize that conservatives can use these points to argue for a continuation of what Moynihan once called "benign neglect." Lemann advocates a renewed liberal-black alliance to promote an "ambitious wave of new programs" narrowly targeted on inner-city blacks: health care and child development, guaranteed public jobs and employment training, and "enough police on foot patrol in the ghettos to make a real dent in the disastrous level of crime." Even if such federal programs do not aid the poorest blacks, Lemann argues, they would provide others the means to move out of the ghettos and

into the black middle class.

How to gain broad political support for this in a country where many whites are themselves facing unemployment or underemployment, inadequate social services, and rising social disorder? Here Lemann is nonchalant, almost naive. He writes, the "real impediment in the short run is not a lack of political support—which in racial matters always comes after the fact, if it comes at all—but a weakness of spirit." White men and women of conscience must simply read *The Promised Land* and muster the will to help. Neglecting the working-class and lower-middle-class whites who keep voting against liberals, Lemann believes that if new, "demonstrably well-run" poverty programs can be launched, American society will support them.

America's Misunderstood Welfare State is a very different sort of book. No personal lives or rivalries appear here, just one lawyer-like argument after another. The conservative ideas that mushroomed in U.S. intellectual and public life in the aftermath of the 1960s take center stage. Marmor, Mashaw, and Harvey are alarmed that right-wing ideologues have managed during the last two decades to "take advantage of the American public's unease" about national decline and poor economic performance, tarring the U.S. welfare state as "ungovernable, unaffordable, and undesirable." This is a "bum rap," the authors insist, and they seek to sweep away misconceptions and induce clear-headed thinking.

Five fact-filled chapters make up the body of *America's Misunderstood Welfare State,* and they are indeed an excellent introduction to the present state of U.S. social provision. The United States, these authors contend, has not so much a "welfare state" as an "opportunity-insurance" state. The bulk of U.S. social expenditures go "to help families maintain the security they have achieved through productive work," shielding them against the risks of unemployment and old age, rather than toward the equalization of incomes and life chances pursued by welfare states such as Sweden. Funds spent on the poor as such are only a small fraction of U.S. welfare spending. And, even there, Americans feel most comfortable with programs designed to promote skills or help poor children, such as Head Start and job training.

Marmor, Mashaw, and Harvey clearly want liberals to downplay battles over "welfare reform" and "abolishing poverty," and to concentrate instead on defending and improving Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare, the two major elements of social provision that they write about in detail. Social Security is, they argue, one of America's greatest "success stories," and conservatives are wrong to argue that the pension system will soon become fiscally unworkable. Only minor adjustments in taxes and the retirement age will be needed to keep the system fully solvent, even with an aging population. Medicaid/Medicare, however, is another story. Ted Marmor is a well-known advocate of replacing the costly and incomplete, partially private and partially public U.S. system of financing health care with Canadian-style national health insurance. The latter leaves the choice of care providers up to individual citizens but requires national bargaining over prices for physician and hospital services. Marmor and his fellow authors favor this wholesale reform, but admit it is not likely to come about any time soon. Unfortunately, they offer few hints of how to move the campaign for a better health care system forward.

Politically, in fact, *America's Misunderstood Welfare State* verges on being a Pollyannaish celebration of past liberal-Democratic policy achievments. Here and there, the authors seem to believe that "misinformation" and "vague, misleading, and mistaken ideas" are all that prevent building a better American "opportunity-insurance" state. At one point, they even suggest that substituting their own term for "welfare state" might generate a new wave of support for liberal policies already in place. It is sufficient, they suppose, for liberals to show that right-wing "ideologues" are factually wrong about the past achievements of Social Security and welfare.

In one way, Marmor, Mashaw, and Harvey are quite unlike Nicholas Lemann. He calls for moral passion and a renewed antipoverty crusade, while they advocate rational investigation to clear up "misunderstandings" and support incrementalist tinkering with a received legacy. But, in another sense, the two books are disappointingly similar. Neither offers new types

CIIS

A graduate school where intellect, intuition and the ageless wisdom of diverse cultures converge.

Integrating Eastern and Western knowledge, the California Institute of Integral Studies is an accredited graduate school with innovative programs leading to M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in:

Clinical Psychology
Integral Counseling Psychology
East-West Psychology
Organizational Development & Transformation
Philosophy & Religion
Social & Cultural Anthropology
Drama Therapy

Certificates in:

Integral Health Studies
Organizational Development & Transformation

V.A. approved. Federal loans, work/study and scholarships available to qualified students. A limited number of foreign and minority scholarships are available annually. Auditors welcome.

For more information write

California Institute of Integral Studies

Box TK
765 Ashbury Street
San Francisco CA 94117
(415) 753-6100

of policy or ideas about fashioning the political alliances necessary for a progressive resurgence. All the authors are comfortable addressing their fellow members of the upper-middle class about a future that will merely build on what liberal Democrats did well in the past.

Clearly, those who would revitalize social provision in the United States are going to have to do better than this, both intellectually and politically. Neither technocratic adjustments nor new exhortations to help poor blacks will rebuild a democratic electoral coalition that favors a strong public sector. Michael Dukakis revealed the limits of managerial discourse; and Jesse Jackson has stretched the crusading approach beyond its previous race-specific limits, but without constructing the broad movement he desires.

It is time for progressives to imagine fresh beginnings for American social policies—beginnings that, to be sure, should recapitulate, in new ways, the best moral passions and cross-class alliances of the past. I have argued elsewhere (in *The American Prospect,* Summer 1991) that a new Family Security Program could address a variety of needs felt by middle-class, working-class, and impoverished Americans alike, build political bridges between black and white, and revitalize progressive electoral coalitions. Like Social Security, this program would balance benefits with tax contributions, and it would help citizens who are working or preparing for work. Like the War on Poverty, this program could tap moral concerns—specifically, the impulse to require and help parents to take good care of their children. Yet a Family Security Program would not target blacks or the poor alone. It would *include* them in universal policies designed to benefit—and draw support from—more and less privileged Americans alike.

Such a vision may seem "unrealistic" at a time when even most Democrats assume the nation can do nothing new that "costs the taxpayers money." But I would maintain that talking in bold terms is the only way for politicians and intellectuals to go forward if they want to reestablish broad electoral support for public social provision. It will take time to achieve that support, but not forever. Americans really do share many problems that cry out for better governmental measures to further the common good. □

EDITORIALS

(Continued from p. 14)

On the other hand, some parts of this job are great. It's incredibly fun to meet the people in the *Tikkun* community (even through your letters), and humbling to hear how much the magazine means to many of you. It's affirming of my own faith to know that there really are thousands of us who are committed to the healing and transforming of the world that *Tikkun* seeks to accomplish—and that the spirit of cynicism has not quenched our hopefulness. And it's a pleasure to meet so many talented writers and thinkers. I know for myself that it's a real blessing to be able to do this work—and I thank you, our readers, for helping to make this possible. □

GORBACHEV

(Continued from p. 22)

hundred days—perhaps a useful mobilizing slogan for those out of power (remember "All Land to the Peasants"?), but not a rational program. Nor will it be easy to get a hungry and goods-starved people to agree cheerfully to the kind of "shock therapy" that may be in store. Russian society is only now emerging from five decades without legally sanctioned markets, and a longer history still of popular suspicion of private entrepreneurship; and there is still a powerful moral legacy of communal responsibility for the down-and-out that long antedates communism.

Similar obstacles lie in the path of peaceful solutions to the nationalities problem, and not just among feuding non-Russians. Yeltsin's assumption of responsibility for the millions of ethnic Russians living in other republics, especially Ukraine and Kazakhstan, while laudable at one level, is fraught with danger at another. Many of these problems, not the least of them the bloody struggle between Armenians and Azeri, were there before communism and will surely be there long after. This is not to say that a democratic regime endowed with popular legitimacy won't have a better chance at success, especially in asking people for sacrifice; but it is also fair to remember that Gorbachev, while in power, had to face these problems daily. Postponing a five-hundred-day wonder, with all its risks, and hesitating to recognize the immediate secession of several republics may not have been admirable decisions, but they are quite understandable when placed in context—a context that always included the possibility of rightist rebellion, and under circumstances much less propitious than those of August.

Whatever his motives and whatever his mistakes, whatever, even, should the evidence emerge, his crimes (and the January killings in Latvia and Lithuania were indeed criminal acts), Gorbachev did much to prepare the ground for Russia's transformation. One may explain many of his moves by invoking preservation of the Party, the Union, or even himself, but history is replete with examples of tyrants who preferred to bring a whole political edifice crashing down on themselves

and their peoples rather than withdraw from conquered territory, befriend ancient enemies, or erode the social and spiritual underpinnings of their own power. We always condemn those who act that way for their shortsighted folly. Is it too much to ask that we praise a man who, however clumsily, confusedly, and without analytical elegance, "tacked" (Malia's image, and this one is perfect) to the left, then to the right, then to the left...? One sometimes needs this kind of a sailor in a storm. □

TORTURE

(Continued from p. 30)

> possibility of a transparent descriptive language or an objective spokesperson, this worldview appears naive, if not ridiculous.

Intelligent radicals such as the writers of the report, Ophir allows, could hardly be so naive. Their strategy surely must have been different, more complex, less ridiculous; we must rather have assumed that torture is such an obvious case of evil that there is no need to differentiate (or pretend to) between description and interpretation; that all we have to do is say that the events happened—and invite the authorities to confirm or deny that. The facts would speak for themselves and every reasonable and sensitive person would find them shocking. But if this worldview is more epistemologically sophisticated than the first, it is just as politically wrong. For there is no general consensus about the evil of torture.

In any event, Ophir argues, whatever our rhetorical strategy, the results are devastatingly the same: We simply reproduce and thereby strengthen the culture of the Occupation. The report by necessity "joins the hegemonic political discourse that the regime of the Occupation creates as if this were the natural order of things, a discourse whose function it is to normalize relations between the occupier and the occupied." The very attention that the report generated—the official inquiries, questions in the Knesset (talk as self-correction)—only proves that it posed no serious challenge. Although organizations like B'tselem aim to provide alternative knowledge, the genre they are forced to use is far too limited; it shuts out too much and compromises too much in trying to adapt itself to the dominant discourse.

To emphasize the limits of the genre—and the costs paid by radicals for using it—Ophir compares the report unfavorably with the recently published volume *Poets Will Not Write Poetry,* edited by Ilana Hammerman and Roly Rosen (Am Oved, 1990). This is a collection of texts (soldiers' testimonies, legal protocols) that makes up a collage of impressions, a montage that abandons any pseudoscientific pretense to objectivity as a way to challenge the hegemonic culture. Such a montage invites the reader to make an active choice (resist or collaborate) rather than—like the B'tselem report—merely placing responsibility on the regime and leaving the reader as a passive observer. The fact that *Poets Will Not Write Poetry* did not sell and received little media coverage compared with the report, needless to say, vindicates its radical status.

In a later response to his critics, Ophir notes that he is just making a division of labor; each genre has its place. His dividing line, however, is clearly between the mere liberalism of RATZ or Peace Now—the discourse into which he claims the B'tselem report is locked—and the true radicalism of the montage. Moreover, the report is not even authentic liberalism, but the work of fellow subversives who, out of despair with radical politics in Israel, have deflected their energy and talents into an inherently defective strategy.

No one exposed to the astonishing twists in critical theory over the last two decades can afford to ignore the intellectual sources from which Ophir's critique derives. Anyone who works in a field such as human rights must share some of his theoretical doubts. Yes, we make compromises and pay prices. No, such reports will not end the Occupation. But a critique that aspires to this type of translation or "application" of theory to the case in question, torture in Israel, is just too facile and self-indulgent. It is victim of two ironies (that favorite postmodern attribute): At the theoretical level, it uses a perspective that rejects any totalizing metanarratives precisely to construct a totalizing critique that lacks any openings, that offers no possibility of multiple meanings other than the fixed hegemonic structure into which all attacks are gobbled up. And at the political level, it is symptomatic of the very despair of which he accuses us.

The genre, the rhetorical strategy, is seen as limiting and restrictive. There is no sense of its possible advantages or effects. First, there is the immediate humanitarian possibility: As long as the terrain of democracy, legality, and accountability continues to exist in Israeli society, it has to be exploited to its absolute limit. Every such strategy of intervention—prevention of individual suffering, redress, tightening legal controls, holding officials accountable—depends on a mode of knowledge that must use the language of facts and universal human-rights standards. An autopsy report shows whether a prisoner died from a beating rather than a heart attack; there is no question here of another "genre" being more effective. As Hammerman and Rosen would be the first to concede, if they had included

such an autopsy report in their collage, it would only have been because a human-rights organization had struggled (with the only rhetorical strategy possible) to obtain an independent inquiry to discredit official lies.

Second, there is the admittedly more remote but genuine prospect of delegitimization. People, especially political elites, can be persuaded to change if they pay too much of a price for staying the same—not only a material price (standard of living, loss of life) but a moral price, a sense that what is being done in their name is no longer legitimate. No doubt, material damage is more threatening than moral damage. But as a case like South Africa shows, the combination of external pressure (sanctions, isolation, disinvestment) and internal fragmentation, which finally led to political change, was informed by decades of "liberal positivist" exposure of the evils of apartheid. Or take a closer case, the French withdrawal from Algeria—in which the intellectual campaign against torture was decisive.

The exquisite aesthetics by which politics becomes text and pain becomes semiotics leaves us with a bitter taste. The problem is not that we are too ready to place our theoretical doubts aside because of political expediency and despair. Nor are we saying that these intellectual worlds—whether those of Quine, Davidson, and Rorty, or of Derrida and Foucault—do not belong in the Middle East (that the Left Bank is not the same as the West Bank, as one of Ophir's critics suggested). The problem lies in sorting out which strands in these theories make any sort of political sense in general and in our local situation in particular. The solution is not to use so inherently (and intentionally) ambiguous a body of ideas to prescribe some "correct" rhetorical strategy. Deconstruction itself does not necessarily undermine the utility of any discourse, nor its truth value, nor the desirability of any political practice, nor the power of the master narratives from which it draws its value.

These master narratives—social justice, national liberation, human rights, the struggles against racism and sexism—have not sunk into some historical black hole. A scene that I often like to think about is Michel Foucault at a press conference in Geneva in 1981, joining activists from "humanitarian" organizations to announce a new human-rights initiative in defense of Vietnamese boat people. Here stands that most profound archaeologist of the link between knowledge and power, that most skeptical critic of liberal humanism, talking about "facts," "rights," and the "duty of international citizenry." Foucault uses the opportunity to theorize about political action itself: how organizations like Amnesty International are trying to create a new right (the right to speak about the unspeakable), a will of individuals "to inscribe itself in a reality over which governments have wanted to reserve a monopoly for themselves—a monopoly that we must uproot little by little every day." I don't see any inconsistency here between theory and practice—or at least no more than is inherent in all life.

Silence

There were moments—when we were collecting testimonies, writing the report, dealing with our critics, or giving evidence to the investigating committees—when we felt that all these words were superfluous. This feeling of hopelessness came not from the avant-garde conceit that the only role for the progressive intellectual is a dignified silence, a refusal to enter the dominant discourse. My inclination to silence came rather from the sense that all the empirical, legal, and moral niceties we were trying to convey added little to the moral issue at stake. Here we were—in company with thousands all over the world who face risks we do not face and expose still worse horrors—still trying to convince our fellow citizens about the importance of *torture?* At the end of the twentieth century, why should anyone still have to explain all this? As a Salinger character says of the Gettysburg Address: Lincoln should just have stood in front of the crowd, shaken his fist at them and walked away.

As with slavery, the only morally defensible position about torture is abolitionist. It simply is not the task of human-rights organizations to talk about alternatives, even to begin to ask, "What would you do if you were in our place?" But even abolitionism needs words. The untalkable has to be talked about because in all societies at all times (and Israel is no exception), and for the vast majority of the population, the contours of daily life depend on ignorance, silence, and passive collusion. Most people exercise what Daniel Ellsberg nicely calls "the right not to know."

There is another very special obstacle to talking about torture, and not just in Israel: the pervasive myth that while such practices are undesirable and unfortunate, they are, alas, necessary. This is the classic utilitarian justification, as old as torture itself: that it is only a method (and the only possible method) of obtaining information, intelligence, testimony, confessions, or evidence. If our findings or those of any other investigation leave only one memory behind, it should be this: Whether the utilitarian defense is morally justifiable or not is not what torture is about.

Orwell saw this in *1984.* No one can ever forget O'Brien's terrible explanation of why Winston must be tortured rather than simply killed: "The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?" □

(Continued from p. 35)

be politically linked; general economic aid can be linked to our political aims.

Chazan: On the basis of what you just said, it seems that you could conceive of linking general aid to political aims, even though you don't want that linkage to happen in the case of these loan guarantees.

Saperstein: In theory, with non-humanitarian aid, yes. However, once unleashed, linkage cannot be controlled. All of us should be concerned that there is far more talk on Capitol Hill of linking foreign assistance to an end to Israel's socialist/social-welfare state than to the settlements.

Walzer: It seems to me that the loss of support for Israel among American citizens, and among the political elite, has a lot to do with the fact that Israel has a very right-wing government, perhaps the most right-wing government anywhere in the Western world. Its policies are genuinely unpopular. What can American Jews do about that? The burden that American Jewish leadership now bears is to convey to Israel the message of the danger that these policies entail—and not to turn to critics of Israel and tell them, "Shush, keep quiet, it's dangerous to talk."

Saperstein: But you know I don't say that.

Walzer: In a way you are saying that now.

Saperstein: Israel was, for a long time, the Teflon ally. Although Americans might have repudiated specific policies like the war in Lebanon, the way Israel was dealing with the intifada, and settlement, they still expressed record-high levels of support for Israel. When Americans thought of Israel, they thought of Paul Newman and *Exodus,* of an Israel whose cause was just and right. George Bush has created an image-change for Israel among the American people that is going to have profound long-term implications. All this would have been impossible had it not been for Israel's West Bank policies, which are morally problematic to Israel's best friends in the Congress and in the American population.

If we don't use linkage, then the task of Israel's friends on Capitol Hill and in the American Jewish community is to find the most effective way possible to say to the Israeli public, "Friends, we are in a state of crisis. You are not losing the loan guarantees, but you are losing America. You will destroy the special relationship with Israel if these policies continue." The public must hear this warning since the government has chosen not to heed the myriad private warnings they have gotten in recent years.

ANNOUNCING THE

MAX AND SOPHIE ADLER AWARD

To recognize artistic excellence in a sustained series of drawings, paintings, and/or sculptures dealing with Jewish subject matter by a Bay Area artist.

The award includes: • a monetary prize of $1,000
• a one-person exhibition at the Judah Magnes and/or the Jewish Community Museum.

To apply:
Submit a brief letter explaining your work. Please include a phone number where you can be reached. Candidates who appear to qualify will be contacted by the judges to arrange a viewing.

Mail letters to:
Max and Sophie Adler Award • Jewish Community Endowment Fund • 121 Steuart St., San Francisco, CA 94105

Application deadline: March 1, 1992

The winner will be announced on June 1, 1992. The winner will be selected by a committee comprised of museum representatives and a member of the sponsoring family.

Segal: Let's face the reality of an enormously vigorous settlement drive. The question we face is, is there any mechanism at hand to stop that settlement drive? If not, that settlement drive is going on forcefully enough so that the peace that we've all been striving for in the Middle East is going to be lost permanently. And that is an enormous crisis. Bush has won one particular battle—and that was only to postpone consideration of the loan guarantees, and during that postponement, settlement construction is being continued.

Saperstein: But if Bush had denied the loan guarantees altogether until there was a settlement freeze, do you think that would have stopped the construction of settlements?

Chazan: The public opinion polls indicate that a vast majority of Israelis are willing to go for a temporary freeze on settlements in order to ensure the loan guarantees. There is a gap between the position of the Israeli majority and the position of the Likud party on this question. But it remains to be seen whether this gap can be translated into a shift in political power in the forthcoming elections in Israel, the timing of which will be determined by Shamir.

Segal: If the placement of conditions on the loan guarantees were not to result in a change in Israeli policy, and the loans were not granted, then eventually this would lead to deteriorating social conditions. We

can't be sure that that would produce a new government, though I would hope that it would. But this is our best card, the best way that the message can be delivered to Israel.

Chazan: Though there is reason to be concerned about a possible right-wing backlash in response to this pressure, it seems to me that we may be facing new rules of the game. The real question is whether Labor and the other peace parties can take advantage of the circumstances created by this kind of linkage. So a lot depends on the capability of the opposition parties to use the opportunity. ☐ *The topic of linkage is also addressed in the editorial that begins on page 7.*

Crown Heights

(Continued from p. 50)

to examine the paradox that only in the constitutional framework inherited from dead white men do women and minorities—and multiculturalism itself—find breathing room and footholds. Feminism and minority rights do not fare well in the Islamic world, Africa, or most of Asia.

Dinesh D'Souza is not wrong to observe that the classic texts and traditional cultures of the Third World are politically incorrect—often monstrously so. Nor was Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrong to respond to a New York state social-studies curriculum committee's complaint that European colonization had eradicated "many varieties of traditional culture and knowledge" by asking: "Like infanticide? slavery? polygamy? subjection of women? suttee? veil-wearing? foot-binding? clitoridectomies? Nothing is said about the influence of European ideas of democracy, human rights, self-government, rule of law." One might pose similar challenges to Jewish tradition; those who are changing it do so as children of the European Enlightenment and of America.

Racial, ethnic, and religious groups tap mythic wellsprings that go back to the dawn of humanity, but they have done so only while existing across thousands of years in relative isolation and mutual suspicion—or within relations of domination and subordination. These conditions have warped them profoundly, equipping them poorly for life in the global village. New wells will have to be sunk. Americans—and, at least partly under our cultural and technological influence, all citizens of the world—now fitfully acknowledge an overlay of common claims and bonds, an emerging, universal culture linking us across the old communal boundaries on terms of increasing equality, if not mutual respect. That prospect is problematic and exhilarating. There may be much to mourn in what we have lost, but there is also much new ground to gain.

In any case, there is no turning back. Whether through intermarriage or assimilation, tens of millions of Americans are by now generations removed from any easily recoverable ethnic, religious, or even racial identity. These new Americans may wind up drawing the lines of their communities without reference to religious inheritance, skin color, or surname. The nation has no choice but to keep faith with them. They, not the demagogues of race, are our future.

What will they affirm? That you cannot build a movement for social justice on lies and intimidation, and that people need training in these truths if they are to learn to detect and reject demagoguery from any source. That, in a diverse society, which no one of our groups can dominate and from which none of us can really secede, anyone who would lead protest politics must demonstrate the ability to build alliances across racial and ethnic lines. That we must honor individual rights and rational analysis as something more than Eurocentric ruses or impositions. That a viable progressive movement cannot be built on demands for reparation for past suffering, much less on revenge. That class is, after all, as important as race.

The more the theatrics of a debased identity politics like Sharpton's and Carson's chill internal debate among blacks and alienate other groups, the more isolated the black community will become from this larger national and global project. The more isolated it becomes, the more fertile ground it will offer for theories of conspiracy and fantasies of redemption through vengeance. As the black community becomes what the historian Fred Siegel terms "an exotic appendage to the polity," playing by special rules of evidence and entitlement, it will become also the object of increasingly awkward liberal condescension and rising mainstream ridicule.

Blacks who can see where this vicious cycle is leading have an historic obligation to break it, for the sake of their own people and on behalf of all humanity. It is our obligation to join and to prod these potential leaders, the people we share platforms and microphones with, the people we too often accommodate with a racist double standard when they rationalize the demagogues' depredations. Those who have made careers out of trading on special racial exemptions from the principles I have just listed must be read out of the progressive movement. The time for squirming and temporizing has ended. In demonstrations and elections, at panel discussions, in the pages of newspapers, and on talk shows, we must find the strength in ourselves to tell such leaders that, henceforth, among the oppressed as well as the oppressors, silence equals death. It certainly did in Crown Heights. ☐

Alma Di

(Continued from p. 69)

From the Diary of a Beautiful Soul

These pages will reflect images of suffering and agony. Through these images will emerge a beautiful reflection of my soul. I shall write in the following pages touching and heart-rending descriptions so that everyone will know—even the most wretched of the refugee children in Gaza—how beautiful I am.

A giant city in curfew. No one comes or goes. The curfew began a half hour ago, and will be in effect until 3 A.M. I pass through the imprisoned city on an officer's briefing. Each officer from the new battalion accompanies the officer he is replacing on the nightly rounds. I, the "subbest" of subalterns, join the armored jeep that is assigned to the Sajaia quarter.

The jeep travels at a slow, at-the-ready pace through the alleyways. A plastic face-shield descends from my helmet and darkens my eyes. A club fashioned from hardwood dangles at my waist. Every time we brake, it jabs me in the ribs.

An open sewer flows through the center of each alley. Overflowing garbage cans and islands of garbage sit in the sewers. The blinding floodlight I hold reveals cats and dogs and hurrying rats.

There is not a soul to be seen. All are shut up in their houses. They have been shut up like this for months, from 10:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M. Only rats, cats, dogs, and soldiers are free to be outside during those hours.

At 11 P.M. we park in the central square. We join another jeep. We all disembark and the square echoes with shouts of "*Ahalan!*" and "What's new?" and "What's up?" Then a raucous argument develops about that afternoon's soccer match in Ramat Gan. Around us are many apartment buildings. Thousands of families are shut inside them. Dim light seeps out from between the shutters. Every so often one may distinguish the shadow of some imprisoned soul behind a drawn curtain.

The raucous argument wakes babies, who begin to cry. Their parents rush to quiet them. Only babies allow themselves to cry when they wake up. The three-year-old children of Gaza have already learned to swallow their tears at night. The families of Gaza have learned to accept in silence the noisy conversations that take place beneath their bedroom windows. Even the toughest fathers of Gaza have taught themselves to be perfect prisoners while the fathers of Gush Dan wake their babies with an argument about a soccer game.

Hundreds of thousands have become so good at curfewing themselves that the men of Gush Dan have become accustomed to ignoring them completely—as if we are in the middle of a ghost town.

Only those possessed of great imagination can measure the strength of the restrained hostility surrounding the ten loud men at 11:00 P.M. in the square. Only these can count all the windows, multiply each window by four (an intuitive guess as to how many bodies to a room), and reach an estimate of the number of hostile babies, hostile old people, hostile boys and girls, hostile mothers, hostile dogs, hostile goats, hostile kids, hostile Muazeens.

The strength of this contained hostility makes me recoil from the thought that for the next thirty days my duty is to command this armored jeep and the alleyways and these men. A great sadness spreads through my body. Before it completely overpowers me I shoot up two full doses of Alma Di.

In an instant, the Sajaia quarter is transformed to that of Nahard'ah. The pathways of Nahard'ah flow toward me like pathways in the sky, and the sadness becomes an otherworldly beauty.

And I steer the stars on their courses like the Muazeen his vocal arabesques. The velvet club in my hand etches the tetragrammaton on each and every star in the skies of Nahard'ah. Trembling, my club writes the Name on infinite stars that are kites on a lifeline, invisible star strings clutched by the children of Gaza in their troubled sleep.

I count the stars—one hundred and eighty-seven thousand, four hundred and fifty-six—the same number as the children of Gaza.

When the children awake, their stars will turn into invisible kites that fly above the sky. When they go to school, they will tie invisible strings to their satchels—and the invisible kites will accompany them through the streets, and will keep them from harm, and will keep them from burning tires and setting up barricades and throwing stones at the men of Gush Dan.

When school is over, the children will run down the alleyways and into the few open spaces that are left them, and they will release the invisible strings and bring down the kites with great speed through the seven heavens until they reappear to the human eye at the nether end of the bottommost heaven....

Every so often a star falls over one of the distant quarters. The stars of Gaza fall when her children wake from a nightmare and reach out their arms, calling for help. I hurry to the shouting children and calm them. Then I gently close their fists and hold on until the star steadies itself in the sky.

I stopped the first six stars with ease as they fell, but on my way to the seventh child, I am set upon by three masked dogs. I grab my club, but it is too heavy and I cannot raise it to swing. I crumple beneath it and the dogs attack me. I try to shoot them, but the officer I am replacing catches me in his arms and smiles at me apologetically. He's sorry to wake me, but I almost fell out of the jeep....

"And besides, it's almost after one—the night round is almost over and you still aren't familiar with your sector...." □

Women and Procreation

(Continued from p. 82)

printed editions, have a different reading of these lines, a reading that distinguishes between the restrictions placed on men and women. The text I have been citing so far is the Vienna manuscript, which the esteemed talmudist Saul Lieberman contends is the most reliable. But the Erfurt manuscript, which Lieberman says was often modified to conform to later talmudic decisions, has a reading of this paragraph that permits women greater latitude in their behavior, allowing them to remain single, to marry a man incapable of fathering children, and to drink sterilizing potions. These discrepancies may therefore be due to the scribe's deliberately altering the text of the Tosefta in order to make it conform to the talmudic ruling that women are exempt from the obligation to procreate.

A second text suggesting that the Tosefta holds that women are obligated to procreate can be found later in the chapter, in paragraph 6: "If he divorced her [because she was barren], she should go and marry another, for perhaps she did not merit being immortalized through this man." If the Tosefta did not think that women were obligated to procreate, why would it concern itself with their immortalization and instruct them to get remarried? Note that the Mishna at this juncture says "she is *permitted* to remarry" whereas the Tosefta says "she *should* remarry."

In short, what at first appears an insensitive treatment of women by the redactor of the Tosefta—the requirement that a man divorce his wife after ten years if she did not give birth—is simply the logical outcome of the Tosefta's egalitarian requirement that women, too, procreate. Both husband and wife need to find other marital partners if after ten years they have not succeeded in having children together.

Keeping in mind what Tosefta says, we may be able to give answers to some of the questions raised by the mishna. The first question was, why did the mishna not spell out what it meant by "desisting" from procreative sex? If we assume that the parallel statement in the Tosefta predates the Mishna, then we can say that the redactor of the Mishna knowingly chose to express himself in a vague manner because he did not subscribe to all three options sanctioned by Tosefta: remain single, marry an infertile woman, or use contraceptive devices. It is possible that the redactor of the Mishna, like the post-mishnaic spokesmen in the Gemara (Yevamot 61b ff.), held that a man should always be married and continue to beget children. Rashi comments that the Mishna's exempting a man from procreation once he has fathered children does not imply that he is exempt from the requirement to marry; however, he may marry a woman incapable of having children. By expressing himself as he did, the Mishna redactor did not endorse any one of Tosefta's leniencies, but at the same time did not rule them out. It is also possible that Tosefta, in this instance, postdates the Mishna, and if so, the redactors of Tosefta and the Mishna agree, and Tosefta is simply spelling out what the Mishna, for reasons of parsimony of language, left out. Either way, we gather that what a man who has fathered children may desist from is not sex but procreative sex.

Similarly, the fact that the second section of the mishna is also vague may again indicate that the redactor of the Mishna disagrees with the redactor of Tosefta. After stating that at the end of ten barren years a man may still not desist from procreative efforts, the redactor of the Mishna could easily have continued to say, as does Tosefta, that he must divorce his wife and pay the marriage settlement. The fact that he stopped short of saying so suggests that, according to him, divorce is not the only option. This means that he thinks that women are not obligated to procreate and hence need not be divorced for their own sake. The Mishna 's leniency results from its nonegalitarian stance.

Finally, after discovering in Tosefta a body of opinion that obligates women to procreate and even deals with the legal consequences of such an obligation, we return even more perplexed to our third query: Why did the redactor of the Mishna not obligate women to an act that they were in any event going to perform? Although I am not sure, I will not hesitate to speculate. Based on what is said in the parallel paragraphs in Tosefta, the redactor of the Mishna may have realized that relieving women of this responsibility leads to two immediate and, in his opinion, desirable results: 1) permitting the use of contraceptive devices by women who

have not yet had children and do not want to produce any; 2) forbidding a wife-initiated divorce (with payment of the *ketuba*) for a woman who has not had a child after ten years and seeks the opportunity to have one. What the Mishna sanctions in circumstances like these is for a woman to have no children at all.

The Gemara on this mishna (Yevamot 65b) raises some of these issues, thereby suggesting that they may have been on the mind of the Mishna's redactor. It first reports that the Halacha follows the anonymous author, namely that women are not obligated to procreate. It then proceeds to record three instances in which women petition their husbands for divorce because after ten years they had not given birth to a child. In all three instances the rabbinical judge grants the request for a *get* (religious divorce), but not because he holds that a woman is obligated to have children. Rather, each of these claimants is regarded as having entered a special plea by articulating a fear that in old age no one would care for her or bury her if she had no child. On the merit of this request, the judge instructs her husband not only to write her a *get,* but also to pay her the marriage settlement. The talmudic rabbis seem to believe that requiring women to have children would inevitably lead in certain cases to wife-initiated dissolution of the marriage, a generally unacceptable option. What is particularly fascinating about these three court cases is that in each one a woman comes independently to seek rabbinic assistance in solving a personal problem. Then, undaunted by the initial dismissal of her request, she reformulates her position and obtains precisely the judgment she wants. This suggests that although women were barred from functioning as judges in rabbinic courts, they had unrestricted access to the judicial system when it came to seeking redress for perceived inequities.

The link between the exemption from the obligation to bear children and the use of contraceptive devices is also alluded to in the Gemara. It recounts the story of a woman who, after giving birth to twins, does not wish to have any more children and asks rabbinic permission to drink a sterilizing potion. She is told that since women are not bound to procreate, her petition is granted.

There is yet one more way of understanding women's lack of obligation. The opening line of the Gemara asks for *tanna kama*'s basis in scripture, and then cites a response by R. Ila'a in the name of R. Elazar b'R. Simon, a late *tanna* and contemporary of R. Judah the Prince. "Scripture says (Gen. 1:28): 'Fill the earth and master it' (*v'khivshuha*)—this means that it is man's nature to master but it is not woman's nature to master." A little later the Gemara cites another statement by the same sage: "Just as a person is obligated to say those things that the other can hear, he is not obligated to say those things that the other cannot hear." The common theme of these two statements is that it makes no sense to obligate someone to perform an act that he is not in a position to perform, that he lacks the means to carry out. Since women are subordinate to men in marriage and are the passive recipients of a man's seed, it seems to me that what this sage is saying is that it would be cruel to obligate women to do that which is not within their power to do.

It is undeniable that the exemption the Mishna redactor favored stems from a sexist construction of marriage and divorce, a model that puts men in control of initiating and terminating relationships. But this is still vastly different from saying that the Mishna regards women as a means with which men pursue their ends. A close reading of Yevamot 6:6 does not support either the position that in matters affecting a woman's sexuality she is treated like chattel, or the notion that exemptions are designed solely for a woman's benefit, to afford her opportunities to guard her private space. What it does say, however, is that men find exemptions for women less threatening than obligations. This mishna is unique in that the redactor himself seems to harbor an unresolved conflict. Although he does choose exemption for women as the dominant halachic view, he opens and closes the paragraph with references to the blatantly egalitarian biblical verse, addressed to both Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply." □

FACING ANTI-SEMITISM

(on the Left and Among African-Americans and Other Oppressed Groups)

- How can you distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israeli policies and Israel-bashing or anti-Semitism?
- What do you do when anti-Semitism crops up among progressive or liberal people with whom you generally agree?
- What do you do when other Jews on the Left tell you that you are "overreacting" or creating dissension, but you suspect that you're facing real anti-Semitism?
- How do you talk to African-Americans and other peoples of color about anti-Semitism in their ranks?

Written by *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner, this 64-page booklet is perfect for:

People who work in interracial offices or community groups.

Students at universities and colleges where "political correctness" rarely includes dealing with oppression of Jews.

Non-Jews in liberal or progressive organizations, or community activists in African-American communities who wish to think through the issues of anti-Semitism more thoroughly.

Cost: $6.00. Send to: Fighting AntiSemitism Project, CJSJ, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, Ca. 94619.

Research funded in part by the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 6)

reasonable to expect of the journalist, as distinguished from other members of the political community, including activists on the Left? If all we can say to the press is "join us in dissent" or "put our people on 'Nightline,'" then we have marginalized ourselves, although we gain the right to feel unjustly treated when the media don't comply.

This is why I have called the Left's media theory a "victimology." It is a victimology because, in railing against media bias, we refuse to undertake the difficult task of defining the *proper* bias for the press in a democracy. My own view is that journalists should be willing to commit themselves not to the policies of the Left, but to the principle of a healthy public sphere, a political space in which we learn to engage each other in serious (and civil) discussion. Those who regard politics as "another name for warfare" (the phrase is Christopher Lasch's) will have no use for such a space. This includes a good many people on the Left, the Right and in the media. And that, in my view, is our real problem.

Jay Rosen
New York, New York

WANTED

International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism seeks

post graduate candidate for unique career as rabbinic leader for cultural Jews

opportunity to be humanist philosopher, teacher, counselor, and congregational leader

Rabbinic Internship and Financial Assistance Available

for more information, call or write
Helen Forman, Executive Director
BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE
28611 West Twelve Mile Road • Farmington Hills, MI 48334 • (313) 477-1410

Notices

Kenneth Schoen, Bookseller. Seeking and selling Judaica, Exile Writers and books on the Holocaust. Catalogue $5. One Cottage Street, Easthampton, Mass. 01027.

Bed & Breakfast:
Los Angeles near Hollywood. Garden setting. Close to tennis, golf. Children welcome. Pipey & Shank's. Reasonable. (213) 664-4425.

Alphabet House
Desktop publishing, HEBREW & YIDDISH typesetting (213) 655-7085.

Relationships

Sophisticated lady, sexy, sultry, svelte. World traveller living well in LA, seeks brilliant, successful, dynamic, sweet, caring, S/DJM 45+ (Bi-coastal OK). Tikkun Box 50.

SJM, intellectual with powerful sense of humor and playfulness, Tikkun politics, observes Shabbat, seeks to build Jewish family (religious but not rigid or chauvinist) with SJF between 32-41 who has strong sense of her own intelligence and attractiveness, is good at loving and giving, ready to have children, and is known by her friends for her sense of humor, smarts, ethical integrity and love of life. Please send photo and long letter. Tikkun Box 51.

Bay Area DJM, 47 psychologist, writer and activist for social change and Jewish renewal, warm and loving person, seeks SJF in 30s, intellectually alive, Jewishly committed, politically progressive and psychologically developed, for relationship, hopefully marriage, and (shortly thereafter) children. Photo necessary and reciprocated. You don't have to live in the Bay Area—I travel a lot to the East Coast. Tikkun Box 52.

NY area SJF, 34, progressive lawyer seeks menschy man with Tikkun-type orientation to the world. I'm attractive, smart and sensitive. Send photo. Tikkun Box 53.

SUNY Press

SPLIT CORPORATISM IN ISRAEL

Lev Luis Grinburg

"The topics of corporatism and dualism in labor markets are important to the understanding of the operation of contemporary societies, not only with respect to industrial relations, but also regarding the issue of coordination of economic policies at the national level."
— Avner Ben-Ner, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

This book examines the structural constraints and dynamic processes of Israel's political economy by a unique combination of neo-corporatist and dual market approaches. Grinberg demonstrates that this combination of theories provides a better framework for the analysis of the last decade of political and economic crises in Israel.

213 pages • $14.95 paperback
ISBN 0-7914-0706-3

State University of New York Press
c/o CUP Services • PO Box 6525
Ithaca, NY 14851
1-800-688-2877 (FAX orders)
607-277-2211 (Customer Service)

Errata: One sentence in the *Tikkun* staff's "Reflections on the *Tikkun* Israel Conference" (September/October 1991) contained errors. The full sentence should have read: "And calling for such incentives helps liberal American Jews show that their program will be in Israel's interests, rather than making them seem to want to hurt Israel as punishment for its 'transgressions' against the rights of Palestinians." In the same issue, in the report from B'tselem, "The Wrong Arm of the Law," Limor Livnat's name was misspelled. *Tikkun* regrets the errors.

A gift subscription to TIKKUN or a copy of the TIKKUN Anthology—ideal Chanukah or Christmas gifts.

There are four kinds of people who deserve priority when thinking about who should get TIKKUN magazine or the TIKKUN Anthology as a Chanukah or Christmas gift from you.

1. Your friends, the intellectuals.
They've read everything, they probably have any book you'd buy for them, and they are bored with the tired, old ideas that surround them.

For them, TIKKUN will be a revelation. It is not predictable and its range of interests defies any easy pigeonholing.

2. Your friends who want (or once wanted) to change the world.
Now surrounded by a culture that proclaims any larger changes to be utopian, they are most committed to their families or careers. But deep in their hearts they still nourish the dream.

TIKKUN will revive their spirits. Instead of the old slogans, they will read new ideas and learn why liberals and progressives have failed and how that could be changed.

3. Your friends, or relatives, the alienated Jews.
They are sure that the Jewish world is too conservative and that Judaism itself is sterile and outdated.

TIKKUN will show them a whole new aspect of Jewish life: A community of Jews involved in liberal/progressive politics, thinkers who challenge the traditional "sacred cows" of Jewish life, Israelis who criticize aspects of Israeli policy, Jews who engage the most challenging aspects of modern philosophy and culture and who have a deep respect for intellectual honesty, wherever it may lead. (Ideal for college students or young adults who stay far away from Jewish concerns!)

4. Your friends, the involved Jews.
They've decided to take their Jewishness seriously —culturally, ethnically, religiously, or as supporters of Israel. TIKKUN will broaden their perspectives, expose them to intellectually deep and spiritually serious struggles with the Jewish tradition and Jewish politics.

And non-Jews, too! *You don't have to be Jewish to find TIKKUN exciting—and a great holiday gift.* For Christmas as well as for Chanukah. Two of the twenty selections in *Best American Essays, 1991* are from TIKKUN! And what a perfect way to expose non-Jews to some of what you love about being Jewish!

But why only four?

You can probably think of many other people who would love a TIKKUN gift subscription or a TIKKUN Anthology. And it's a nice way to support TIKKUN.

The gift sub will bring six piping hot issues of the magazine to the person of your choice. The TIKKUN Anthology will introduce them to the ongoing dialogue and debate in the magazine, with essays, poetry and fiction by Abba Eban, Woody Allen, Carol Gilligan, Susannah Heschel, David Mamet, Annie Dillard, Peter Gabel, Judith Plaskow, Jessica Benjamin, Michael Walzer, Al Vorspan, Todd Gitlin, Allen Ginsberg, Cornel West, Christopher Lasch, Michael Lerner, Marge Piercy, Anne Roiphe, Linda Gordon, Arthur Waskow, Rachel Adler, Arthur Green, Benny Morris and more. (You don't just have to buy it for someone else—it's a great gift for yourself, too!)

Gift Subscriptions: If you don't yet subscribe, pay $25 for yourself and $22 for each gift. If you do already subscribe, pay $22 per gift. Call 1-800-877-5231 or send your name and the names/addresses of those receiving gifts (you can use the card in this issue or mail a check, payable to TIKKUN, or Visa/MasterCard info to: TIKKUN, P.O. Box 332, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0332.

TIKKUN Anthology: Paperback, $16.95 plus $2.90 postage/handling; Hardback, $39.95 plus $2.90 postage/handling. Call 510-482-0805 or mail check or Visa/MasterCard info to: TIKKUN, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619-3002.

We will send gift cards immediately—but allow several weeks for delivery of the book or first magazine.

Tikkun (tē•kün) . . .
to heal, repair and transform the world.
All the rest is commentary.

תיקון

A READER-SUPPORTED MAGAZINE

Like National Public Radio and television, TIKKUN depends
on its readers' generosity to help keep its voice alive.
TIKKUN ASSOCIATES donate $100 a year or more to sustain the magazine,
but smaller contributions are also welcome and deeply appreciated.


1.0
4.5
5.0
5.6
6.3
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
2.5
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6