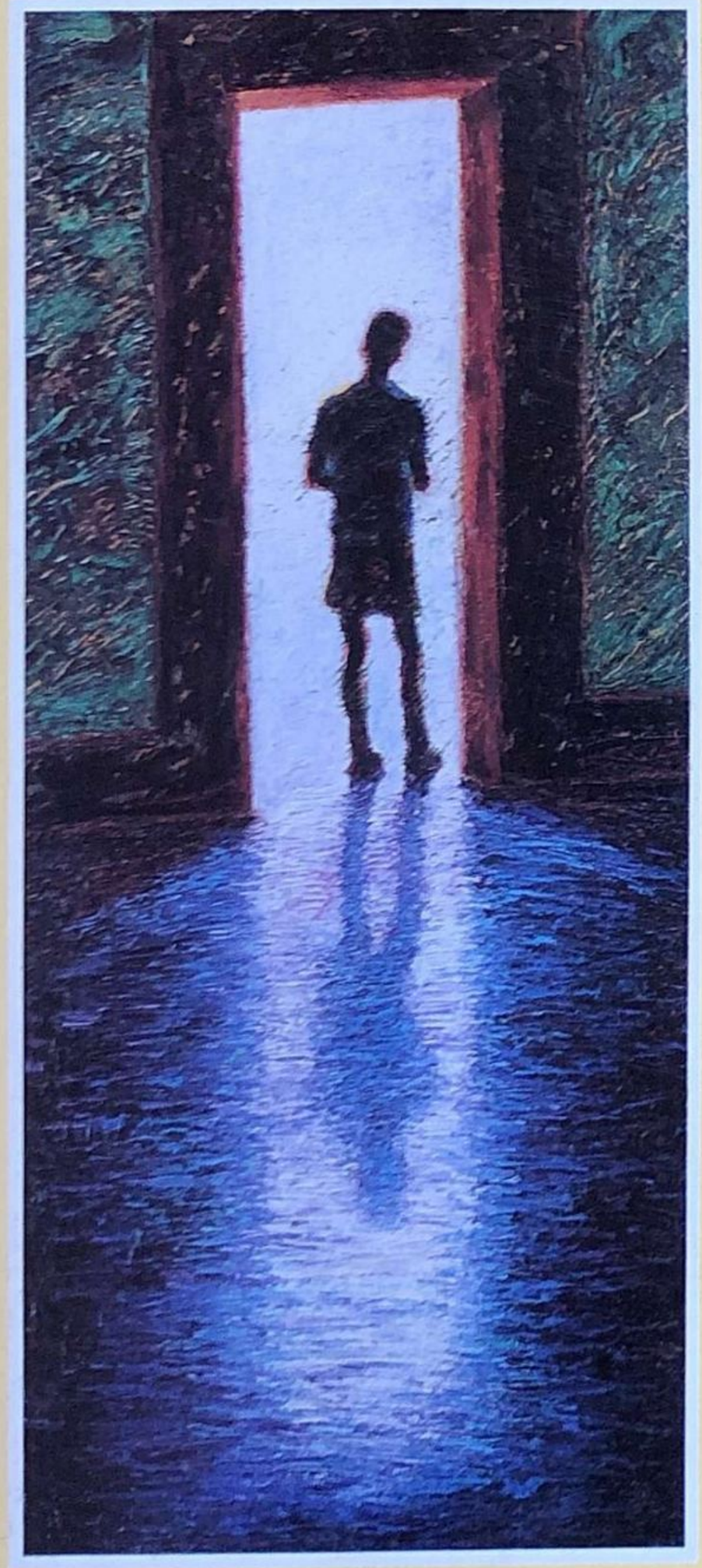
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Passover Haggadah Insert

TIKKUN

Reviews: *Stuart Klawans, Rachel Biale, Melvyn Dubofsky, Deborah Kaufman, Robert Cohen*
Beyond Beef: *Jeremy Rifkin*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1992 $6.00



JFK

The Assassination, the Movie, and the Coverup

Peter Dale Scott, Peter Gabel, Todd Gitlin, and Michael Lerner

Maus and Jewish Comics
Paul Buhle

Palestinians Seeking Peace
Danny Rubinstein

Visiting Silwan
Gila Svirsky

Jewish Renewal
Arthur Waskow

Mismanaging the Recession
Fred Block

Religion vs. the Public Schools
Betty Mensch & Alan Freeman

Strategies for 1992

Geraldine Ferraro, Rep. Barbara Boxer, Fred Siegel, Elaine Kamarck, Harold Meyerson, Peter Gabel, and David Kusnet

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The flying Jew

I never met my Uncle Dave.
The most real thing I know about him
is how he died, which he did
again and again in the middle of the night
my mother screaming, my father shouting,
Shut up, Bert, you're having a bad dream.

My Uncle Dave, the recurring nightmare.
He was the Jew who flew.
How did he manage it? Flying was for
gentlemen, and he was a kid from the slums
of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland—
zaydeh one headlong leap ahead of the law
and the Pinkertons, the goons who finally
bashed his head in when he was organizing
his last union, the bakery workers.

Dave looked up between the buildings,
higher than the filthy sparrows who pecked
at horse dung and the pigeons who strutted
and cooed in the tenement eaves,
up to the grey clouds of Philadelphia,
the rust clouds of Pittsburgh with the fires
of the open hearth steel mills staining them,
a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night.

He followed into the clouds.
My mother doesn't even know who taught
him to fly, but he learned.
He became one with the plane, they said.
Off he went to France. He flew in combat,
was shot down and survived, never
became an ace, didn't enjoy combat,
the killing, but flying was better than sex.

He took my mother up once and she wept
the whole time. She wouldn't fly again
till she was seventy-five and said then
she didn't care if the plane went down.

It was his only talent, his only passion
and a good plane was a perfect fit for
his body and his mind, his reflexes.
The earth was something that clung to his shoes,
something to shake off, something to gather
all your strength into a taut charge
and then launch forward and leave behind.

After the war, he was lost for two years,
tried selling, tried insurance, then off
he went barnstorming with his war buddies.
Time on the ground was just stalling time,
killing time, parked in roominghouses
and tourist homes and bedbug hotels.
He drank little. Women were aspirin.

Being the only Jew, he had something
to prove every day, so he flew the fastest,
he did the final trick that made the audience
shriek. The planes grew older, the crowds
thinned out. One fall day outside Cleveland
he got his mother, sister Bert and her
little boy to watch the act. It was a triple
Zimmerman roll he had done five hundred
shows but this time the plane plowed
into the earth and a fireball rose.

So every six months he died flaming
in the middle of the night, and all I
ever knew of him was Mother screaming.

Marge Piercy

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 7 NUMBER 2

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17 Fred Block **The Keynes Mutiny** George Bush has thrown overboard any hope of a serious recovery in his eagerness to make hard times keep paying for those who get rich on other people's money.

21 Danny Rubinstein **From Hope to Uncertainty** Palestinians looked to the Madrid negotiations with the hope that international attention would win them both peace and self-determination. Disillusionment followed when Israel remained intransigent in its refusal to exchange land for peace.

24 Ira Steingroot **New World Seder** Celebrating Pesach with a rich array of alternative haggadot.

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28 Jeremy Rifkin **Beyond Beef** In this excerpt from his latest book, the noted environmentalist and social critic explains how American corporate interests have made the mild-mannered cow the cause of an ecological crisis of catastrophic proportions.

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JFK: The Assassination, the Movie, and the Attempt to Discredit the Movie

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Poetry: on the inside front cover: **Marge Piercy**'s latest novel is *He, She, and It* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); on page 35: **Julia Vinograd** won the Before Columbus Award for *The Book of Jerusalem* (Bench Press, 1984); on page 51: **Harvey Shapiro**'s most recent book is *National Cold Storage Company: New and Selected Poems* (Wesleyan University Press, 1988). **Cover art:** *Boy* by Candice Gawne. Oil on canvas. 84 x 36 inches, 1989. Courtesy of Koplin Gallery. **Comics:** On page 10, *Marx the Miracle-Worker,* from *Groysser Kundes;* on page 11, permission *Mad* Magazine © 1954 by E. C. Publications, Inc.; on page 12, from *The Bubbeh* by Sharon Kahn Rudahl; on page 13, from *The New American Splendor* (Four Walls Eight Windows), © 1991, Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb; on page 14, from *The Saga of Stuie Spitzer* by Aline Kominsky Crumb © 1980; on page 15, from *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* (Pantheon Books © 1991) by Art Spiegelman. **Photography:** The photograph on page 26 is by AP/Wide World Photos; on page 33, by Donna Binder/Impact Visuals; on pages 41, © 1992 by George T. Kruse; on page 49, by AP/Wide World Photos; on page 71, courtesy of Brenwood Studio © 1991; on page 85, © 1985 by Warner Bros Inc. **Line Drawings:** On page 17, *Ladder* by Jerome Kaplan, dry point: on page 59, by Suzanne M. Long; on page 68, *The Auction* by Paul Marcus, woodcut print on paper, 1986.

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Letters

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

Crown Heights

To the Editor:

In his petulant, unwarranted, reckless, and infantile excoriation of people of African ancestry, Jim Sleeper manifests a supercilious pedantry and arrogance that is at once amusing and irritating ("Demagoguery in America: Wrong Turns in the Politics of Race," November/December 1991). In our naiveté, we thought that white and Jewish experts on African people had died out, or at least had become more knowledgeable, truthful, accurate, and respectful. But we slept on Sleeper.

Mr. Sleeper criticizes people of African ancestry for how they acted toward other Blacks on issues ranging from Tawana Brawley to Dr. Leonard Jeffries to Crown Heights to the Korean boycotts.

Needless to say, all these issues created disagreements and tension within the Black community. Black people struggled with themselves on what constituted truth and appropriate response, all in the context of rising racism, escalating poverty, internal violence, ravaging disease, widespread drug abuse, bias-related violence, and internal differences on everything from sports to politics.

The Tawana Brawley case almost tore the Black community apart. From beginning to end, there were continuing, heated arguments, threats, and charges of collusion with the police. Some wounds are still not healed.

Mr. Sleeper and his ilk added to our woes by trying to coerce and cajole Black people into adopting words and actions that were critical of other Black people. In some instances, there were arrogant demands that denunciations be issued even before the statements and/or actions of the persons accused had been analyzed.

However, it is satisfying that Sleeper can find only a few Blacks to commend. Mr. Sleeper and his ilk always can find, must find, a few leaders of African ancestry to ordain. God help those leaders. For they whom the Sleepers ordain are rejected by their own people. It is better to be blasted by the devil than to be blessed by him.

What Sleeper and his ilk want is to dictate tactics, timetables, targets, and

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issues that Black people should adopt among themselves in their struggle for human rights and self-determination. In other words, bark when they say bark and bite when they say bite.

So Sleeper threatens us, with the obnoxious gall of a spoiled brat throwing temper tantrums and hurling wild threats. Mr. Sleeper warns us that if we do not behave ourselves, we are going to find ourselves isolated. Already, he pontificates in his smug arrogance and ignorance, we have alienated feminists, Asians, Jews, and whites.

As one who has been active on many issues with many different kinds of people, I have seen and participated in many multinational, multireligious coalitions. One of the most recent was around the St. John's University sexual abuse case. That issue brought together representatives from various religious faiths, gays, lesbians, feminists, Asians, Jews, whites, and people of African ancestry. I do not remember seeing Mr. Sleeper or reading anything he wrote on the case.

On a more personal note, Mr. Sleeper labeled me a demagogue in relation to Crown Heights. Yet he fails to mention anything I said or did. The reason is quite simple: There is nothing I did or said that Mr. Sleeper or anyone else can point to that was either anti-Semitic or inflammatory. In addition, Mr. Sleeper makes the libelous allegation that I participated in scams. Again, he does not single out one instance where this occurred. I criticize not only Mr. Sleeper for this reckless, irresponsible, and libelous piece of journalism, but also the editors who allowed it to happen.

Rev. Herbert Daughtry
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Jim Sleeper's account of the Chasidim of Crown Heights is lacking in factual knowledge of their behavior. As a resident of Crown Heights who has been active politically there for thirty-five years, I can document the following:

For many years the Chasidim took the lion's share of summer jobs for teenagers, despite the desperate situation of black unemployed youth. It took the threat of legal action by the NAACP to loosen the Chasidic grip on these jobs.

Elizabeth Holtzman, when a member of Congress, wrote a carefully

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JFK:

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documented report citing the use of political power by Chasidim to gain special privileges in access to government housing.

The Chasidim relate to no one outside of their own particular sect. They do not relate to the Jewish community of Brooklyn. One example was their crossing the Local 1199 of the Hospital and Health Care Employees Union picket line at Kingsbrook Hospital despite the pleas, in Yiddish, of Jewish women strikers.

This account of Chasidic behavior in no way excuses the destructive behavior of Al Sharpton, a scoundrel if there ever was one.

Marshall F. Dubin
Brooklyn, New York

Jim Sleeper responds:

I've followed Herbert Daughtry since 1980 with decreasing respect and increasing exasperation. In *The Closest of Strangers,* I explain why I think his Christian/Marxist/Black-nationalist politics is hopelessly confused and counterproductive. As predominantly black organizations such as East Brooklyn Congregations have built thousands of affordable homes and strengthened their communities, Daughtry, who preaches in Brooklyn but lives in suburban Teaneck, New Jersey, has drifted increasingly into nationalistic rhetoric and ambulance chasing. He is so deeply imprisoned in his peculiar racial consciousness that, politically, he simply doesn't know what he is doing. In consequence, some of it is destructive.

Daughtry stood right next to the Reverend Al Sharpton and attorney Colin Moore at several press conferences as they fabricated lies about the Crown Heights auto accident. Nodding in approval, he added, "We've got a group here, the Chasidic community, abusing their power in collusion with city officials, backed up by the police." (As I explained in my essay, such claims are seriously outdated.) According to *New York Newsday,* Daughtry went on to note that the federal government had intervened in the South when local governments had been "in cahoots with the KKK," so the feds should intervene here in Brooklyn, too.

During the riots, Daughtry was observed running among rock-throwing youths, cheering them on. Asked about this by *Newsday* reporter Merle English, he replied: "My heart is in the street. That crowd is my crowd." Saying that he was there to ensure that those arrested were treated properly, Daughtry added that his message was "I'm here with you. I may not agree with what you're doing but I'm not going to stand in the way and tell [you] about cooling it." He said he resented City Hall's suggestion that it is the clergy's duty to "still the natives."

This is muddled leadership, a disservice to black youth and racial justice, and I find Daughtry's statements demagogic. I also find it troubling that, at a Sunday service at his House of the Lord Church a couple months after the Crown Heights melee, he chose, in introducing visiting celebrities, to save the best for last: "Leonard Jeffries!" he cried, as his congregation burst into a prolonged ovation. Jeffries would have been greeted with silence by twice as many worshipers at the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngbloods's St. Paul's Community Baptist Church. It is because Daughtry is so terminally besotted with racial grievance that he became a cheerleader for the demented Jeffries.

Marshall Dubin's letter perpetuates stereotypes of city favoritism to

Chasidim, and, in any case, not only is Al Sharpton unjustified, but so is the whole tragic, psychodramatic way so many Blacks conflated a traffic accident with a murder.

Jim Sleeper
New York, New York

Cover Art

To the Editor:

The cover of Volume 7, Number 1 is shocking, appalling, and especially offensive to women. I certainly did not choose *Tikkun* over *Playboy* because I was interested in supporting pornography. Art containing pornography is inappropriate and unseemly on the cover of your magazine. I do not want my family to think that any branch of Judaism supports sexism and the subjugation of women.

Sarah Berman
New York, New York

To the Editor:

So this is the way you plan to heal, repair, and transform the world, is it? By being more daring than *Playboy* on your front cover? Are you trying to impress upon passersby that this magazine is about sex? Is this what you have in mind for improving upon the moral standards of traditional Judaism, on behalf of the rights and needs of exploited women? Is this your idea of liberating us?

I await a full apology and a damn good explanation. After I see the outcry from your readers in print, I will be canceling my subscription.

Nina Moliver
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Anne Flatté (art director) and Andrea Craig (editorial assistant) respond:

The painting we chose for the cover of the January/February 1992 issue is disturbing because it depicts a distressing situation. We consider it a visual interpretation of the way Anita Hill was treated by the Senate Judiciary Committee and of the way women are treated every day by men in authority. The clothed man, not concerned with the viewer's gaze, is holding a book (knowledge, law, authority, power) and scrutinizing the exposed body of the woman. The woman is not a traditional nude, even though the painting is in a classical style reminiscent of Caravaggio. She is not engaging the viewer of the painting: Rather, she is looking at the book; at the same time she is painfully aware of the male gaze that the philosopher, and by association, the male viewer-spectator, direct toward her.

What is offensive is not the painting, but the situation it depicts. Our editor felt that, given *Tikkun*'s discussion of Anita Hill's treatment, the painting was appropriate and would not be misunderstood. We, however, think that it stands by itself as a strong statement about the oppression of women, and does not need the articles to legitimize it.

We, too, are tired of seeing women in various states of undress in advertisements and on magazine covers (mainstream magazines, not just pornographic ones), every time we pass a liquor store or newsstand—women who are obviously being used exploitatively. The January/February issue of *Tikkun* addressed this kind of exploitation by focusing on the Thomas-Hill affair. The painting on the cover was meant to represent the pain every woman faces every day. We were not using nudity to sell the magazine; we were putting forth one interpretation in the continuing discussion of the imbalance of power in gender relations.

Jews and Christmas

To the Editor:

Oppression comes in many forms, some as sharp as breaking glass on Kristallnacht, others as unguently concealed as the pressure to be normal. To ignore either form is to imperil one's survival.

Christmas is, in its history, practice, and symbols, a religious celebration for Christians, hailing the birth of the man they preach to be the Messiah whom the Jewish Prophets called the son of God. For a Jew to join in this celebration in any way is to give credence to the divinity of Jesus and to break the first of the ten commandments given to the Hebrews at Sinai. We are told to have no god before our God, and that there is only one God. Jews confirm this belief each time they chant the Sh'ma Yisrael, one of our oldest prayers. It was this concept of an ineffable, unnameable, and most of all, single God that set the Jews apart from other ancient peoples, and that was later incorporated into the

(Continued on p. 93)

"The solution . . . is to increase the quality and sensitivity of our discussions about sexuality."

Linda Williams
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EDITORIAL

Judaism and Death

Michael Lerner

My mother died in January after a prolonged struggle with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. I am still mourning the loss. There have been some moments in the grieving process when I've needed some distancing from the feelings of loss—and at such moments I've been reflecting on Jewish attitudes toward death. I offer the following thoughts in her memory.

* * *

It might be comforting to imagine my mother (as some who recently offered me comfort have encouraged me to) as a ghostlike being floating around the universe, looking down on me, and *shepping naches* (getting pleasure) from my successes. Or to picture her, after having entered into some heavenly assembly of ghosts, being able to intervene on my behalf with the ultimate Judge of the Universe to soften my defeats and my pains. Even more comforting to believe that although her faculties and her ability to formulate sentences and coherent thoughts gradually diminished and then disappeared entirely over the course of the past five years, her soul had magically detached and was thinking its own thoughts and feeling its own feelings, quite whole and independent of the actual incoherence of her earthly being. But such comforts seem little more than self-pitying self-deception. The psalmist proclaimed clearly an early biblical understanding: "The dead shall not praise God, neither all those who descend into silence ... therefore *we* [the living] shall praise God from now and ever, Hallelujah" (Ps. 115). Descending into silence is the reality of death for the psalmist.

Judaism began as a rebellion against the death-centered civilization of the Nile. Enslaved to build the great pyramids as monuments to the desperate efforts of the rulers of the world's greatest imperial power to achieve immortality, the Jewish people confronted in its daily toil the perversion of life being subverted in the service of death. Judaism emerged as a this-worldly religion. The Torah commands that we not follow the way of the Egyptians; neither should the Jews create an imperial system nor a death-focused religion.

The Egyptians were involved in what Ernest Becker calls the denial of death. This denial has led human beings to construct systems of power, build monuments and empires, attain wealth, or write books and make movies—to try to become heroes in the effort, as Becker puts it, "to transcend the limitations of the human condition and achieve victory over impotence and finitude."

Yet why are we so afraid of the limitations of the human condition? Ken Wilber's book *Up From Eden* offers an intriguing but ultimately partial answer. Wilber argues that all human beings intuit that their true nature is to be part of the infinite spirit, and that their ultimate hunger is for unification with the totality. Nor should this unification be thought of as a loss of all egoic consciousness or a fading into an oceanic state of dissolution. "Wholeness," says Wilber, "is not the opposite of egoic individuality, it is simply its Ground, and the discovery of the ground does not annihilate the figure of the ego. On the contrary, it simply reconnects it with the rest of nature, cosmos and divinity."

The problem, says Wilber, is that each person is terrified of real transcendence, because transcendence entails the loss or death of the isolated and separated self. People want wholeness, but they resist and fear it since it would involve the death of their separate selves. Instead they fill up their lives with the pursuit of sex, money, fame, knowledge, and power as substitute gratifications.

What I like about this account is that it acknowledges that ultimately human beings are motivated by more than the material needs for food, clothing, shelter, and security. Many of the historical struggles among cultures, nations, and peoples can be understood as different modes of the search for symbolic substitutes for what people most deeply want—a return to a fundamental wholeness and connection with the entire universe. These substitutes offered themselves in response to the fear of losing one's own self and dissolving, dying, disappearing.

What Wilber does not explain is why human beings are so reluctant to lose their individuality, and why, if the experience of being part of the totality is so

In memoriam • Beatrice I. Lerner

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא

much part of who we really are, we don't find its compensations enough to outweigh our individual fears. In fact, many spiritual traditions present an answer that I find unacceptable—one that sees this fear as a product of some fundamental flaw in human beings. Poor, sad creatures bound by a world of illusions, we are unable to transcend our illusory selves and to realize our full identity with the totality.

In my book *Surplus Powerlessness*—and partly inspired by the unpublished work of Peter Gabel—I have tried to show that the kind of individuality and separateness that human beings have developed in the past ten thousand years has been a response to the misrecognition we experience in our earliest encounters with a world of alienated others. This misrecognition is sustained and perpetuated by a social order that keeps us apart and separate—and, by extension, undermines our ability to join with others to challenge existing systems of class domination. Of course, the alienation of self is never total—and there remains within each of us a strong yearning for a fuller connectedness with others. We long for a way of being with others in which we recognize others and are recognized for the fullest expressions of our God-self. And we seek to realize a way of being in community that allows us to unite fully, in, through, and with other human beings, with the totality or the Whole that is all being. Yet our experience of life in class-dominated societies is something quite different: religious and political communities that offer merging, unity, and togetherness under an oppressive and painfully unfair distribution of the opportunities for human beings to develop their capacities.

There is scant solid historical data to corroborate these memories of communities unencumbered by patriarchy and class division. Yet buried within the folklore of humanity are the distant memories of a different way of being, an earlier period in which communities were not fundamentally shaped by class domination. But by the time we get to recorded history, "merging with the whole" may have already taken on a very new meaning for most human beings—because the "whole" was no longer a community in the older sense, but rather a human system of oppression and imposed pain. This pain was often justified by the authority of the religious tradition as ontologically necessary or simply appropriate to the fallen, sinful, or otherwise lower consciousness of human beings. Most people felt they had little choice but to go along with these flawed and distorted communities of meaning, but the anger that they began to feel at under-recognition and the lack of real connection became the flip side of these community experiences. And this anger, in turn, was mobilized by ruling elites against external enemies: the barbarians, the evil

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ones, those whose very being represented a flaw in existence and perhaps explained why life didn't feel as good as it should have.

No wonder, then, that this primary form of merging with the totality, the Whole, now became a troubled proposition. For some the solution was to separate human beings from the rest of nature, to abandon all hope of merging with the human totality, and to focus attention on merging with the nonhuman order that offered—in imagination, anyway—to free us from the distortions of class societies. These people became the gurus and seekers of the Eastern spiritual tradition. They had their analogue in philosophers, writers, poets, scribes, prophets, and religious thinkers, and eventually in traders, bankers, shopkeepers, and artists who, each in different ways, sought separation from the dominated consciousness of the totality. In the West, this rejection of the corrupted community often took the form of developing oneself as an individual with a separate identity, increasingly detached from the structures of existing religious and political pseudo-communities. Individuality developed not as some irrational "fear" of being part of the totality, but rather as a way of preserving the spark of divinity within us that cannot survive if we merge with an unjust community. Many of us run as fast as we can from those who would recruit us into a "community" precisely because we've

had thousands of years of such people offering us pseudocommunities that are too often embedded in ugly systems of oppression.

Yet the kind of individuality that we can develop under these distorted conditions is necessarily limited and distorted. We get to claim ourselves, but only as beings who have been systematically misrecognized, only as beings who are doubtful that we can really connect with others, only as beings who harbor a crippling cynicism and pessimism about our ability ever to really fulfill our deepest needs for connection and recognition. It is this fundamentally isolated human being who then desperately seeks to perpetuate his or her own existence through various strategies to deny death and thereby to keep alive—though always in a state of isolated and separated consciousness.

In short, what Eastern religions leave out of their account is the recognition that people do not crave a fundamental integration with the totality, but crave an integration with a *just* and morally righteous totality. The denial of death arises out of a depressed and pessimistic acceptance of the unchangeability of systems of domination that make genuine community impossible.

Judaism did not have to deny death precisely because it did not believe that systems of domination were immutable. Instead it insisted that the universe, in its essence, is based on justice and love, and that our alienation from a potentially loving and just totality is a product of changeable social relations, not an ontological necessity. Our fear of death, then, is historically conditioned by the false choices we face: between alienated pseudocommunities of oppression on the one hand and alienated individuality on the other. Absent a community that affirms what it is to be a human being—the ways that we are created in the image of God, the ways that we are in need of each other's love, recognition, and creative cooperation—we will always seek some partial solution. It may be individual "eternal life" in heaven, individual acts of glory, or the power of conquest—all of which are bound to fail us in providing what we most deeply want. Overcoming the false consciousness about death requires a collective process in which we actually create a new "we"—and cannot be achieved solely through acts of self-transcendence and individual spiritual growth.

Hence, Judaism arrived on the scene to proclaim that the alternative to subordinating life to death was to create justice and love in this world. And this transformation was not to be an act of individuals only, but required us to remake the entire world through a community dedicated to a God who is the force in the world that makes this transformation possible. To the extent that Judaism itself in later stages of its existence made compromises with various death-oriented practices, built in ideas like yahrzeits and memorial services, began to develop an elaborate ritual around death, and opened itself to notions about spirits that survived the body, it was simply reflecting the degree to which it had lost confidence in its original encounter with God. Hellenistic influences that emphasized the split between the body and soul became powerful cultural forces once the Greeks had conquered Judea. The attraction of an other-worldly focus grew in direct proportion to the degree to which Jews began to believe that the power of imperialism could not be overcome in this world, that the evil was too great to be successfully dismantled, that the story of liberation from Egypt was either a fairy tale or a story of what had happened long ago, rather than an image of what was always possible as long as the God that made possible the overthrow of oppression was the God who created and ruled the universe.

Staying true to Torah, then, is staying true to a vision that does not look to another existence, that sees immortality, as the tradition says, planted within us, within the community of the people of Israel itself rather than in some other world. Our task as Jews is that of healing, repairing, and transforming the world so that we need no longer fear merging with the totality and losing our individuality.

My mother worked at that task of healing and repair. First as a leader of the Zionist movement and Hadassah, then as a leader in the Democratic party, then as political advisor and administrative assistant to a United States senator, she found the ways that seemed to her to best serve that healing and repair. When she first introduced me to JFK in 1959, it was only after carefully grilling him to assure herself that his support for Israel was not lukewarm. It was from her that I first learned that the organized Jewish community did not reward its most tireless activists and even its most dedicated Zionists with the honor they deserved—unless they were also big fund-raisers. And I learned from her stories about the inner workings of the Democratic party just how corrupt even liberal politics could be. For the sake of Israel, she made many compromises to work with politicians she otherwise might have found distasteful, but she also used her considerable influence to oppose injustice. I was most proud when she was one of 400 Americans revealed to be on President Nixon's secret "enemies list," but by that time I had already inherited some of her spunk and chutzpah and was myself sitting in a federal penitentiary for having organized antiwar demonstrations. Her immortality, like that of the entire people of Israel, resides not in some other world, but in the way that we continue the work of healing and repair from generation to generation. □

BOOK REVIEW

Of Mice and Menschen: Jewish Comics Come of Age

Paul Buhle

The New American Splendor Anthology: From Off the Streets of Cleveland by Harvey Pekar. Four Walls, Eight Windows Press, 1991.

Maus, A Survivor's Tale I: My Father Bleeds History by Art Spiegelman. Pantheon, 1986, 159 pp.; and *Maus, A Survivor's Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began* by Art Spiegelman. Pantheon, 1991, 136 pp.

Raw 3: High Culture for Lowbrows, edited by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly. Penguin Books, 1991.

As recently as 1948, the famed art critic Bernard Berenson could say in his *Aesthetics and History in the Visual Arts* that Jews of ancient and modern times had merely reproduced the art forms of peoples around them, and badly at that. Only a few years ago, in *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century,* Avram Kampf noted that the acceptance and understanding of a "Jewish art" with a distinct history is recent, the very phrase still vague and elusive. The same could be said, with more painful accuracy, of the Jewish contributions to the visual art that enjoys the vast majority of appreciative observers: the comics.

But wait. Even as the daily newspaper—long the chief source of public access to comics—goes into a slow fade, postmodernism has surprises in store. The boundaries between genres in the art world, already under stress for half a century or more, blur and almost lose their meaning. Adults read comics (a familiar habit in most parts of the world). The idea of a comic novel, historically about as elusive as the "great American novel," suddenly comes to life. A Holocaust survivor's story by Art Spiegelman, a Jewish storyteller and one of the guiding aesthetic mavens of today's comics, attains international fame. Indeed, as I write, the Museum of Modern Art is having an exhibition on the making of *Maus.* That's about as high as any artist can reach. Meanwhile, out in Middle America, Harvey Pekar sets himself against the greed and stupidity of our times, recording daily life with absolute detail.

No coincidence, the obsessions of these two Jewish artists. Archmodernist Spiegelman experiments with form, like so many Jewish modernists of the century; he and the other artists that he (along with his wife and coeditor Françoise Mouly) sponsors in *Raw* magazine are as determined to expand the comic genre as Yiddish writers once were to stretch their folkish language to the limits of modern literature. Meanwhile Pekar, scarcely a stylist at all, has become the ultimate mensch of the comic world, following the intuitions of the self-educated, militantly egalitarian Jew in a world of pedigreed deceivers. Pekar endlessly rewrites, in scripts that a variety of artists illustrate, the old plot-line of immanent critique from the American Jewish novel, that increasing material success has not necessarily brought either wisdom or morality. He drives home, in his own homely way, the deeper truth of the Diaspora, the determination to see people of every kind as *people,* not objects, despite all their cruelties to one another and to themselves.

The comic strip has propelled generations of Jewish popular artists to explore the world around them, manners and morals, as boldly and imaginatively as any social critic, novelist, or filmmaker.

Spiegelman and Pekar are faithful, in another way, to a large if mostly hidden legacy of Jewish comic form. On the one side, the modern artist's use of folkloric and historical-religious traditions, the driving urge behind many of the greatest paintings of the century, compresses Jewish epochs like the folds of an accordion to bring out an old, yet always new, music. Even on the museum wall, it defies the preciousness of the artistic object and suggests the vernacular. On the other side, the commercial art of the comic strip, vernacular to its essence, has

Paul Buhle, publisher of Radical America Komiks *(1969), edited a special 1983 issue of* Shmate *on Yiddish and Jewish humor. He is working on translations of literary humorist Moshe Nadir, the "bad boy" of the ghetto in the 1910s and 1920s.*



Marx, the Wonder-Worker, leads the children of Israel through perils to paradise.

propelled generations of Jewish popular artists to explore the world around them, manners and morals, as boldly and imaginatively as any social critic, novelist, or filmmaker. At the end of the century these two sides, never far apart, are moving toward a reconciliation.

The story starts, like so many others, with the late nineteenth century and transcontinental Jewish life. The rise of well-distributed Yiddish publications immediately raised questions of illustration, as did the early Yiddish theater's demands for set designs. Jewish ideas cried out for graphic expression. But answers did not come easily.

Artists and semipopular publishers developed revealingly different approaches, high and low art. Russian artists searched out motifs in the old wooden synagogues of the Pale. No sooner had this reclamation begun than modern art burst upon the scene and added new elements of abstraction to the mix. This new ferment produced the genius of Marc Chagall on one side of the Atlantic and that of Jewish-American artists like Abraham Walkowitz, Ben Shahn, and Leonard Baskin on the other. A look at those flying clocks of the shtetl, or at the abstract portraits by Shahn and others of Jewish street scenes on the Lower East Side, shows how readily the timeless and the specific, the religious and the secular, came together through the artist's brush.

Meanwhile, the struggling Yiddish editors and their illustrators shamelessly copied the goyishe commercial mainstream, adding their own special touches to it. These two sides were Jewish comic art in the making, but more steps had to be taken before they could come together. In 1909 a melancholy poet, Jakob Marinov, launched the *Groysser Kibitzer,* soon renamed the *Groysser Kundes* ("big stick," a play on Teddy Roosevelt's phrase), a quarto-sized weekly of jokes and cartoons. It was, as critic Aaron Lansky puts it, both sitcom and conscience of the ghetto. Imitating and reprinting freely from the British magazine *Punch* and the German *Simplissimus,* the *Kundes* also added a stock of Yiddish storytellers and comic artists, the best talent available. The *Kundes* ran until 1927, and never before or since has so much Jewish popular art been crammed between covers.

Along with the usual array of stumbling drunks and fancy ladies, the *Kundes* caricatured every Jew of political, economic, and literary note in one way or the other, mostly lovingly, but often with a bite. A beloved short-story writer might be drawn grating onions to stimulate his literary tears. Abraham Cahan, editor of the powerful *Jewish Daily Forward,* was regularly savaged as an empire-builder, a slave-driving promoter of *shund,* or literary trash. Among radical themes, the Jewish-American working class was seen literally toiling in Pharoah's land, to be led out by the Moses-looking socialists; the folk-soul of the people wept at the martyrs killed in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire; and World War I was the behemoth come to crush the best hopes of the Jew in civilization. But with the *Kundes*'s demise, unfortunately, came the end of the Golden Age of Yiddish-language comic art. A handful of brilliant caricaturists continued in the left-wing press, with styles that looked increasingly like commercial comic art. But they drew for steadily fewer readers, further constrained by the internecine factional wars that pitted devoted Yiddishists and radicals against each other.

Jewish comic artists breaking out of the ghetto into popular commercial entertainment, meanwhile, tried to make "Jewish" signify "funny." Their first major breakthrough in the mainstream comics, *Abie the Agent* by Harry Hershfield, handled self-caricature deftly. Started in 1914, the strip had a fat little salesman, Abe Kabibble, maniacally obsessed with money and status. "Abie" plays opposite his fashionable girlfriend ("Reba, Mein Gold") who finds him faintly ludicrous. These are lovable stereotypes, more so than they sound in words. They were not so different from the two stage Irishmen, Mutt and Jeff, or other ethnic and nonethnic "types" in the daily papers. Jews were just differently



Mad *depicts the cheerful homogeneity of fifties pop culture as a totalitarian theme park.*

funny, with too few artists (like Rube Goldberg, inventor of the fantastically complicated "infernal" machine, or Milt Gross, famous for dialect humor) to make the kind of combined impression on the field that Jews had in comic vaudeville, sheet music, and other such popular venues.

It took commercial comic books to fulfill the Americanizing Jewish artist's aspirations. Indeed, the character who first made comic books popular was the creation of two socialist sympathizers imagining a hero who could bring hope to a Depression-ridden America: Superman, brainchild of Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster. The "Man of Steel" might, for all we really know, have been the symbolic Golem summoned up by the weakling (read: ghetto Jew) Clark Kent, who himself couldn't possibly win shiksa Lois Lane's heart. Poor Golem, he couldn't have her either.

Superman inspired imitations by the score, and the rest (along with funny animals) is comic book history, an economic history tightly linked to New York's young popular artists and culture merchandisers of the 1940s. Which is to say: a field with plenty of able, energetic Jews. Yet typically for their generation, their work merges into or actually shapes mainstream culture without revealing any specific origins.

Then, suddenly, just as the surge of comics wound down and the genre suffered repeated blows from television, McCarthyism showed its ugly head. And something very Jewish happened. One range of comics turned spectacularly critical and self-reflexive. Its leaders were,

one could say, the folk-intellectuals of the popular-culture era, creating a *Groysser Kundes* for offbeat Americans of every race and ethnicity and boldly satirizing the national religion of cash.

William M. Gaines, son of a prominent comics publisher, and Harvey Kurtzman, son of an International Workers Order (i.e., Left-fraternal) family in the Bronx, became the two key players. Gaines published a line of comics, EC (for "Educational Comics"), some of which could *only* be Jewish (who else would put out *Psychoanalysis Comics*?) but were also the highest form of comic book ever produced in this country. *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy,* with stories by Ray Bradbury among others, posed dilemmas so strange that they all but compelled readers to come to grips with earthly problems like atomic waste and racism. Another EC series, *Tales from the Crypt, The Vault of Horror,* and *The Haunt of Fear,* was truly Poe-esque: Amid an overabundance of garish horror books, these comics featured technically elegant drawing and a barely subtextual theme of social comeuppance, fate's revenge upon the greedy and the exploitive. EC produced, in short, comics with a conscience—a maneuver in the best of the Jewish radical tradition, without its infighting or gnawing dogmatism.

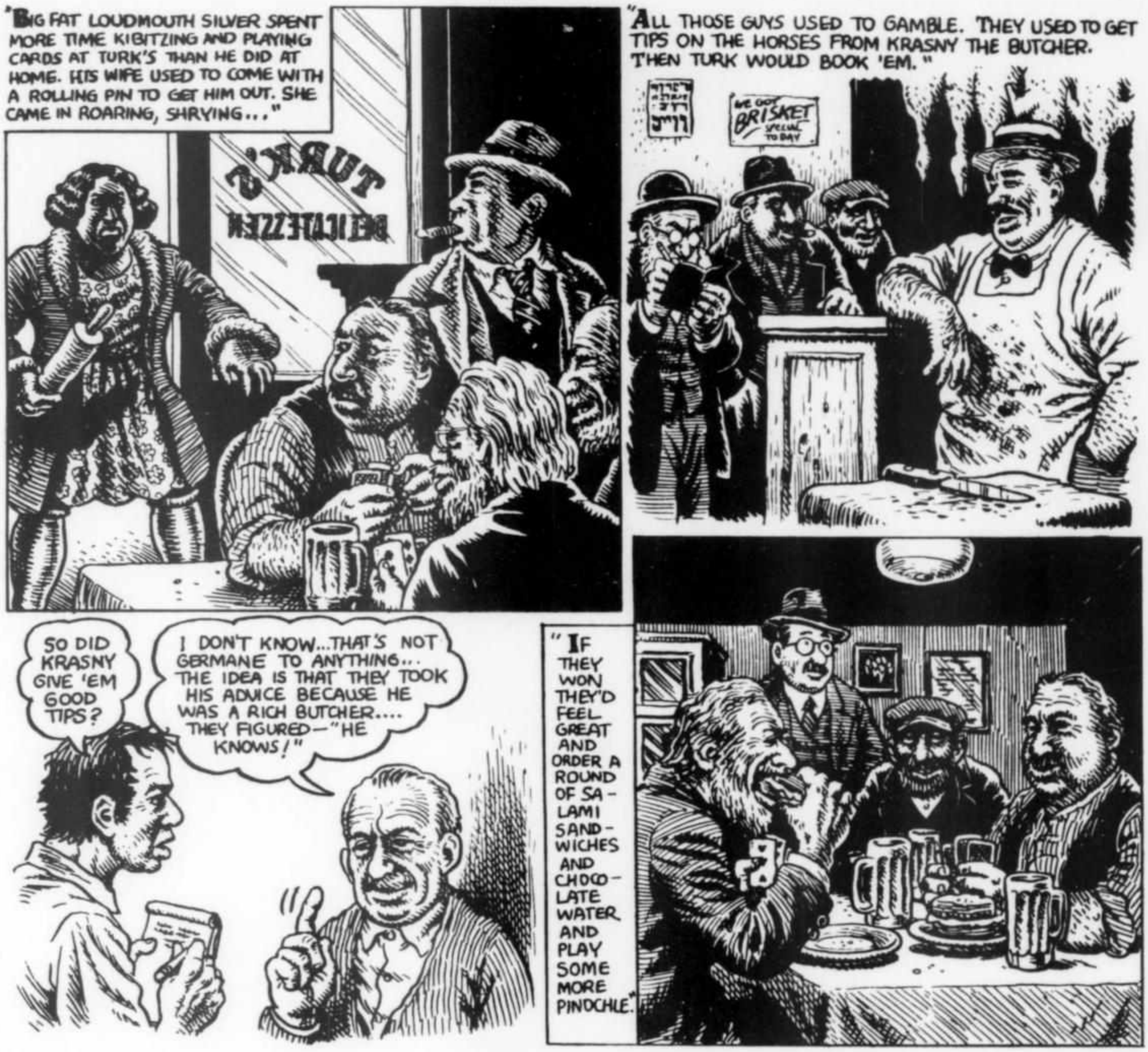
The artists were in fact mostly gentiles. But the writer-editors, Al Feldstein and especially Harvey Kurtzman, guided the tale-telling as carefully as any film director did his actors and rewrite men. Kurtzman gained rapid fame in the trade for his compulsively researched, exacting renditions of war-stories, sans the usual sanctification of blood-letting. Turned off to the Communist party during his teen years (although he did draw backgrounds for the *Daily Worker*'s one beloved strip, "Little Lefty"), he despised historical deceits of every kind. Himself a sometime satirical artist, Kurtzman proposed the latest EC venture, *Mad Comics,* in 1952. It was not only the first genuinely *new* humor magazine in the United States for generations; it would also shape the way comic artists saw themselves twenty and even forty years later.

Mad combined the precise drawing and plots of the other EC lines with an astute, reflexive commentary on the radio and television shows, films, comic strips, and popular literature (including the newspaper tabloids) of the time. The total impression was more than satire or lampoon. Kurtzman's obsession with detail transferred itself, for instance, to his artist Bill Elder's portrayal of a totalitarian "Dizzyland," where comic characters are dragged away by Gestapo-looking guards for failing to wear the prescribed white gloves. (*Mad* was also responding to Walt Disney the notorious strike-breaker, who fired almost his entire animation staff rather than accept unions.) Or *Mad*'s famed attack on Joe McCarthy, seen waving cropped photos of a supposed "redskin" (i.e., "Red") on a television game show. Rather than editorialize, *Mad* satirically revealed its own perspective on the lies of its time.

There was yet another dimension to *Mad* that reached beyond satire as such. The incredible detail—layer upon layer of gags ("*Freud is a Fraud* by Freed," reads one barely visible book title) and quasi-Yiddish words like "Furshlugginer"—found its master in Bill "Chicken Fat" Elder, as he occasionally called himself, and its apex in a certifiably postmodern "Special Art Issue" in 1955. With intertextual references to everything from the 1890 Lower East Side to Picasso to Marilyn Monroe and automobile ads, it narrated the cartoonist-Dadaist in the making, a mad genius whose drawings often look, none too strangely, like crowded urban Jewish neighborhoods heavy with Old World accents. Other *Mad*s took contemporary



Sharon Rudahl reimagines the exodus from the old world.



Harvey Pekar recounts anecdotes from the Jewish-American past and tales from the Cleveland streets.

comics apart technically, showing readers the arbitrary connections of dialogue and action. Pretty remarkable stuff, when you consider comics of any kind, including *Mad,* were largely for kids, adolescents, and blue-collar types. *Mad* had a large cult following, as a crazed letters column reveals, but never really gained a mass readership until Kurtzman quit in a spat with Gaines in 1955 over the direction of *Mad Magazine.* Kurtzman wandered on, finally to *HELP! Magazine* in the early 1960s, with Gloria Steinem as a staffer and several future giants of the "underground" comics among its contributors. As fate would have it, none of the artists were Jewish.

One more, highly political, element in the 1950s story helps explain the next major breakthrough of Jewish comics artists, almost twenty years later. EC had been wounded, in spirit and in pocketbook, by the Comics Code, a supposedly "voluntary" industry regime of self-censorship policed by Catholic parents' groups, among others. Weeks of congressional testimony at the height of the McCarthy era found Gaines struggling hopelessly to explain why every depiction of violence should not be seen as a source of juvenile delinquency. Of course, many of EC's competitors were senselessly brutal and tasteless in their depictions. But the broad brush, as always, slapped over the good with the bad. An issue melodramatically (and satirically) announced "MAD GOES UNDERGROUND!"

The comics that appeared outside the mainstream, in the alternative newspapers and counterculture publications of the later 1960s and 1970s, by no coincidence, called themselves "underground." More than a few writers and editors vividly recalled the comics censorship



The high-school angst of Aline Kominsky Crumb, one of the pioneers of women's undergound comic art.

episode. They and others made the most of the new freedoms established in the courts, flaunting sex and (less frequently) violence. Scarcely an artist—and there were dozens if not hundreds of extraordinarily talented youngsters in the underground press—had not imbibed *Mad Comics* somewhere along the line. Many considered them the unattainable ideal of design and execution.

Perhaps because the little underground comics industry emerged in San Francisco rather than New York, or because budding Jewish humorists simply turned their talents elsewhere, it was a remarkably goyishe field at first. The autobiographical model may have stirred the first presentations of Jewish themes, notably by Sharon Rudahl, who detailed and popularized for new generations historical incidents like strikes and pogroms. Other artists, including Aline Kominsky and Diane Noomin, stuck mostly with their own family memories, often none too favorable, but marked by critiques of materialism, which suggested the possibility of other, better, and no less Jewish ways of life.

The underground comics (or "comix," a favorite neologism) nearly expired along with the counterculture and the cheap printing costs. Some critics claim that this fate was richly deserved, that artists and publishers had gone along enthusiastically with the exploitation of their aesthetic freedoms, titillating a mostly male readership and insulting women, among others. (Less harsh observers, myself among them, felt the creation of dramatic rebellious figures within a major medium of popular culture had nevertheless been an enormous contribution.) By the middle 1970s, only the truly determined underground artists stuck with their work, usually as a sideline to a money-making occupation or the avocation of some very lean living. The shakedown also arguably made the survivors think hard about their lives and their long-term artistic aspirations.

Enter Harvey Pekar and Art Spiegelman. By no means as famous as R. Crumb or a half-dozen other 1960s comix notables, they managed —even against their own expectations—to define their Jewish character amid changing comic styles and the recovery of comic history.

Pekar, as a personality, seems to emerge out of a time-warp: the self-educated Jewish intellectual living out his consciousness among the mostly lower classes of the ethnic-racial inner city. This is the Yiddish writer all over, of course, but thirty or forty years later. Part of the answer is Cleveland itself, a rustbelt capital supreme. European accents never ceased to be a normal thing here, and yuppies remained almost invisible. Pekar, like the proletarian novelist of old, works a day job (he happens to be a hospital filing clerk) and his stories revolve around the workplace, the streets, and his own psychically bumpy private life.

The critic Marshall Berman once apotheosized Pekar as a character straight from nineteenth-century Russian literature, a lowly clerk to all appearances but with a soul burning inside. It's a nice thought, and Pekar has actually published some illuminating commentaries on Russian writers. But it misses the ethno-American slant of the artist, his personal alienation tempered by cataloging the world of personalities immediately around him: African-American, Czech, Greek, Italian, Polish, Latino, and of course Jewish. Sometimes he argues with them in his comic dialogues. But he refuses to see himself as superior to

them. Unlike Russian literary intellectuals, Pekar is a real and not merely abstract democrat.

His vehicle is the largely autobiographical strip, in his own self-published comic book series *American Splendor* (1976–present) and occasional commercial anthologies (two so far). Like Harvey Kurtzman, Pekar writes the story line, develops general ideas about how the characters might look—and, unlike Kurtzman, leaves the rest pretty much up to the artists. The best-known one, by a vast distance, is R. Crumb, whose styling of Pekar the personality collecting local stories and living out his own life has, as much as any single factor, brought the writer recognition. In *The New American Splendor Anthology,* "Pa-ayper-Reggs!!" shows an old Jew with a recollection of rag-collectors, removed from Russia and Poland to U.S. cities from the 1890s to the 1920s, the original recyclers in horse-driven wagons picking up salvageable materials, making a sale, and then heading for the deli to eat salami sandwiches, drink chocolate phosphates, and play pinochle. This strip characteristically ends as it begins, with Pekar taking down notes from an old man proud of his memory.



The reflexive work of Art Spiegelman probes the perils of success and the burden of survival.

Most of the other stories are either mundane conversations observed or personal meditations with considerable angst, lots of *cinema verité* style nonevents, and only occasional drama. Pekar's own appearances on the Letterman show are low-key triumphs. The artist assaults the host, breaking through layers of talk-show affability, shouts down the studio audience's boos, and demands more money for his next appearance. Eventually, Pekar pointed to the moral corruption inherent in NBC's ownership by General Electric, the defense-industry king. His days at Letterman seem to be over. Aesthetically, there is no distancing here; art mirrors experience.

Pekar is a political and intellectual bulldog. Give him your phone number, and he might call early some morning, yelling in that hoarse voice I recognize from the old Yiddish radicals, untiring in their indignation at the hypocrisy around them. Sometimes I hold the phone away from my ear to turn the sound down. But in truth, I like his sincerity. I imagine that the world of

Jewish comic strips has been waiting for him through the twentieth century. He completes a moment, and keeps completing it as his work continues. I recall one very early cover, with a bus of Clevelanders leaving for California: On the street is a Pekar figure taunting, "Go ahead and leave! Who needs ya!" That's the way he obviously feels about Jewish radicalism and much else. But he also lives his workaday life, and he accepts the people around him as he accepts himself, fatalistically and with humane impulses.

Spiegelman is quite another story, by now widely discussed if (in my view) insufficiently debated. A dropout from Harpur College in the late 1960s, this young artist fell in with the underground comix crowd, moved to San Francisco and, with Bill Griffith (creator of *Zippy*), edited the most important artists' anthology series of its day, *Arcade*. It was a lovely mid-1970s product, both funny and serious in its way, even attempting to explain avant-garde art history to its audience. But *Arcade* came too late or too early and died after a half-dozen numbers. Even then Spiegelman's strips had a unique double concern both for modernist visual themes and for an uncompromising confrontation with his own troubled identity. Other artists' work seemed to flow more easily; Spiegelman's was full of consciously layered symbolism, complete with visual footnotes, or determinedly referential to specific popular culture genres.

Returning to New York (he celebrated it with a glum artistic depiction of giant cockroaches), he drew bubble-gum comics for a day job and ruminated on his own family past. "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," which he reprinted in *Maus I,* recalls his guilt at his mother's suicide: Spiegelman drew himself as a literal prisoner of guilt without hope of release. (Somehow, his critics would complain, he still blamed his mother for it.) That story, and the pained but honestly respectful feelings it evoked among his father's circle of fellow survivors, stirred what must be considered Spiegelman's chief life's work.

An extended oral history with Art's father leads to an exacting version of one experience of the Holocaust. More than a few readers have described it as the most compelling of any depiction, perhaps because only the caricatured quality of comic art is equal to the seeming unreality of an experience beyond all sane reason. Spiegelman's mechanism of making the Jews into mice, the Germans into cats, and the Poles into pigs has perhaps attracted the most commentary in comics circles, with one side arguing that any such depiction is inherently limiting and the other answering that the depiction is consistent from the Jewish standpoint.

Less discussed, but more vital in my view, is the often unflattering portrait of the victim-survivor Vladek. By no means a dashing hero, he could be described as the typical interwar young bourgeois, caring little for anyone but himself and nothing for ideals. His self-concern serves him well, in the sense that survival renders despair a useless emotion. But it leaves him with little capacity for reflection. Near the end of the second volume, during an automobile ride in upstate New York, Art's wife Françoise stops to pick up a black hitchhiker and Vladek almost explodes; he personally disproves any theory claiming that suffering brings understanding between history's victims ("It's not even to compare the shvartsers and the Jews!" he tells her bitterly). Art's mother, Anja, was the idealist who would take risks to circulate radical propaganda and even gave away her bread in the camps. By contrast, Vladek was not a nice guy, ever; the Holocaust could not be expected to create a generous spirit he didn't possess. As Spiegelman commented to me, the mainstream critics seem to have missed this point entirely, quite an important one to the artist. Perhaps they can't accept the implications.

To turn from *Maus* to Spiegelman's (and Françoise Mouly's) other creation, *Raw,* is to get a better feeling for the stroll in hell that Art envisions as the modern adventure. An oversized international anthology of experimental comic styles, *Raw* has, happily, been adopted by Penguin Books, adding to its circulation and hopefully solving its economic problems without detracting from the editors' avant-garde integrity. Here we find, for instance, Justin Green, a half-Jewish guilty Catholic (and sign-painter by profession) whose metaphysically rendered memories of his childhood inspired autobiographical explorations by many comic artists including Spiegelman; Kim Dietch, comix pioneer (also half-Jewish), whose work recalls carnival culture from the 1910s to the 1930s; and Ben Katchor, according to Spiegelman the "most Yiddish" of today's comic artists, who draws crowded but also somehow dated street scenes, his characters issuing half-finished phrases, and affording glimpses of an urban ambience that lost its vitality with the close of the automats.

I didn't used to like *Raw* very much because it removed comics too far from the homegrown American styles delved into and actually expanded by earlier "underground" artists. Now I appreciate the intent. I can no more call it "enjoyable" than *Maus,* but that is hardly the point. I could say the same for many pages of *American Splendor*: The comics were put on the page to be endured and absorbed. This is entertainment, but so reflective and intense that it requires repeated observation. Like any great Jewish novel. □

The Keynes Mutiny

Fred Block

The Bush Administration just doesn't get it. It can't develop effective antirecession policies because it is working with flawed economic analyses and a badly distorted picture of the economy. So instead of formulating a serious plan for recovery, the administration has produced ineffectual strategies designed to evade the true causes of this recession, such as blaming the loss of jobs on the Japanese. In his long-awaited State of the Union speech, Bush's overblown rhetoric sought to obscure the inadequacy of his proposals —some minor tax gimmicks and still another call for a reduction in capital gains tax. The proposed capital gains tax is not just terribly inadequate, but it would provide even more incentive for the speculative excesses that have created many of our current economic problems.

In the meantime, the teachings of John Maynard Keynes have been completely forgotten. Keynes insisted that governments only defeat their own plans for recovery from an economic downturn when they institute austerity policies. If a government cuts spending in a recession—reducing welfare grants and other outlays—it reduces the purchasing power of most people. And this reduced purchasing power drags the economy down further: Employers are unable to sell goods and services and then have to lay off even more employees.

This gloomy prophecy, which we assumed had gone the way of the Great Depression, is now back in our midst. State and local governments all over the country have lost revenue as a result of the recession, and they are now slashing away at expenditures in order to balance their budgets. Yet as they do so, they only weaken the economy further. The federal government could easily rescue them by restoring revenue-sharing (the program that redistributes federal funds to state and local governments), which was largely gutted under the Reagan administration. But we are continually told that this cannot be done because the federal budget deficit is already so large. Economic policymakers warn that a deliberate increase in the federal deficit would push up long-term interest rates, and that this, in turn, would further discourage corporations from borrowing money to finance new investment. And without greater investment in new businesses, the economy will sink deeper into recession.

This logic hinges on a dubious claim. Conventional wisdom maintains that the savings of households dropped precipitously during the 1980s. This decline in personal saving, combined with mounting federal budget deficits, meant that less money was available for business investment. As a result, long-term interest rates remained high. Government antirecession policy seeks to reverse this trend in the simplest way imaginable: Have the Federal Reserve lower interest rates in order to generate renewed business investment. Any increase in the federal deficit would disrupt this process; hence, state



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and local governments have no alternative but to take up the slack by slashing spending and cutting programs.

Such draconian measures, however, are the product of misleading assumptions about the economy. The government's data does show a sharp decline in personal saving during the 1980s, but there is a simple explanation for this. When they calculate personal saving and personal income, government statisticians ignore a significant factor: realized capital gains—the income that comes from selling assets that have increased in value. As stock market prices rose dramatically from 1983 to 1987, the top 5 percent of households received a windfall of realized capital gains. These households increased their consumption so that the growth in aggregate consumption spending outstripped the growth in ordinary income. The government's data thus shows a decline in the saving rate, when the rate of saving actually rose compared to total income (including capital gains), most of which went to the rich.

Once we adjust for capital gains, we see that the problem in the 1980s was not too little household saving, but too much money sunk into speculative investment. People and firms reinvested their capital gains in stocks and real estate, and this reinvestment drove up prices even more rapidly, creating additional capital gains. The result was a speculative bubble, in which prices are driven to unrealistically high levels with the promise of big returns. Investors rushed to put all their available funds—and all the money they could borrow—into the stock market to cash in on the bubble's spectacular returns.

However, such windfalls carry severe hidden costs. A speculative bubble drives up long-term interest rates, since everybody wants immediate access to money in order to play the market. And firms begin to realize that they can make more money by angling for quick returns on market speculation than by investing in plant and equipment—the buildings and machinery used in producing goods and services. In the second half of the 1980s, U.S. nonfinancial corporations did not raise money in the stock market; instead they bought stocks to the tune of $100 billion a year. The boom in mergers, acquisitions, and leveraged buyouts during the 1980s was only the most visible way that some of the country's largest corporations were able to reap huge profits from the appreciation of stock prices. Meanwhile, actual business investment in plant and equipment fell from 1986 on—a development that helped fuel the recession that began in 1990.

The real economy—as distinct from the buying and selling of pieces of paper on the financial markets—did expand from 1983 through 1989, but in ways that helped to deepen the severity of the current recession. As the economy grew, it also grew top-heavy: These same years saw a dramatic shift of income in favor of upper-income families. And again, when we allow for capital gains income, this shift becomes even more pronounced. In the meantime, the lower 80 percent of households found that their purchasing power grew scarcely at all, and firms that produce for the broad domestic consumer market had little reason to expand their productive capacity. This weakness in demand was most striking in the market for new housing. The cost of new housing has skyrocketed over the past fifteen years, particularly on the East and West coasts. Since their incomes for all practical purposes remained stationary, more and more families were priced out of the market for new single family homes. In 1988, according to a government study, 68.8 percent of American households could not afford to buy the median-priced new homes in their region. Not surprisingly, investment in new housing declined dramatically as a percentage of GNP. At the same time, the Reagan administration continued to escalate military spending and dismantle revenue sharing with state and local governments. Thus, the rate of government civilian investment, already in decline since the late 1960s, took a steep downturn. By spending less on the infrastructure for transportation, water provision, and sewage, government at all levels pulled out one of the main props that support private-sector investment. Infrastructure spending declined from 3.5 percent of the GNP in the 1960s to less than 2 percent in the 1980s.

Other government actions, meanwhile, were able to soften some of the damage to the private sector. The Reagan era's huge increase in military spending led defense contractors to add plant and equipment at a rapid rate from 1983 to 1986, giving the economy a large dose of the traditional Keynesian stimulus. And tax incentives and changes in financial regulation stimulated a boom in the construction of commercial office space. Millions of square feet of new offices were added year after year, keeping the construction industry busy.

But this scenario had changed drastically by the late 1980s. The end of the cold war meant that the federal government no longer needed to add to the productive capacity of the defense sector. Meanwhile, vacancy rates for commercial office space began to soar, and it became clear that the supply of new office buildings produced in the 1980s would probably exceed demand until the end of the century.

The seriousness of the current recession shows the extent to which all of the traditional sources of demand have weakened. None of the economic indicators that point to sluggish demand—consumer spending,

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government spending, construction—can be expected to revive spontaneously. This being the case, lower interest rates do not give businesses enough incentive to increase their investment spending. It is more likely that they will continue to trim payrolls and close plants.

Economic policymakers have greeted these developments with a host of bad ideas. The most bizarre is George Bush's proposal for a cut in the tax rate on capital gains. The economic consquences of the ballooning capital gains of the 1980s are by now painfully apparent. Federal tax policy should be aimed at reducing the speculative fever that causes sharp increases in equity or real estate prices, since speculation diverts resources from productive investment. In other words, we should be seeking to increase the marginal tax rate on capital gains. After Reagan's 1981 tax cut, capital gains on assets that had been held for less than six months were taxed at a maximum rate of 33 percent compared to previously high marginal rates of 70 percent. This reduction helped to fuel the frenzy of short-term stock trading in the 1980s.

Investment tax credits to encourage private sector investment is another, slightly less bizarre policy under consideration. Indeed, in another era, this might not have been a terrible idea. But over the last thirty years, a series of "tax reforms" has sharply reduced the corporate income tax, both through lower rates and more generous provisions for depreciation. As a result, corporate income tax provided only 12.4 percent of federal tax revenues in 1990, compared to 20.5 percent in 1967. Tax incentives cannot be a serious economic tool when the rate of effective corporate taxation is already so low.

Proposals for tax cuts to middle-income taxpayers are also misguided. Politically, it is doubtful that Congress would ratify such cuts without also conceding substantial reductions in the capital gains tax. In any event, a federal government plan to return $300 or $500 to the average household at the same time that state and local governments are cutting services and increasing fees by larger amounts is just plain stupid. Think, for example, of those households with children enrolled in a strapped state university system. Their extra $300 will cover only a fraction of the expected increase in tuition and fees.

What the federal government should be doing is shifting revenues back to state and local governments in order to finance increased spending on infrastructure. A shift of $70 billion would immediately relieve the recession-induced budgetary pressures on state and local governments and prevent another round of spending cuts and tax increases. Since spending levels have been cut so dramatically, every state and local government has a backlog of urgently needed repair and replacement projects. At least half of the money devoted to federal revenue-sharing should go to finance infrastructure spending projects that have been cancelled or postponed for lack of resources. These could be started up very quickly, putting people to work while also halting the slide of consumer confidence. In the meantime, federal policymakers should bolster this public-works campaign with related measures, such as federal loan guarantees to underwrite $50 billion a year of new construction of affordable housing by local governments and nonprofit agencies. New housing should be targeted to the homeless and the groups at greatest risk for homelessness. In addition, Congress should move to revise the current tax structure in order to increase rates on upper-income households. Congress should also enact specific disincentives to discourage speculative trading in asset markets. A more rational—and equitable—tax structure should make it possible to increase federal government spending on infrastructure, education, and job training by another $100 billion a year.

There is every reason to make housing and public-sector infrastructure the centerpiece of a comprehensive recovery strategy. Both were the actual forces that drove the U.S. economy's remarkable expansion after World War II. It is wishful thinking to believe that one can bribe the business sector with tax relief into investing more; this strategy only works to diminish public-sector revenues. And the failure of the private sector to produce affordable housing means that the government must intervene with loan guarantees to finance a major increase in the housing stock. At the same time, a carefully planned program to bring government spending for infrastructure and "human capital"—the education and training of the labor force—up to the levels of our European and Japanese competitors will bolster demand and stimulate private spending. These steps are good social policy as well as good economics.

These reforms alone will not secure our economic future, but they will respond to the immediate crisis of the recession, while also beginning to address some of the economy's long-term problems. They would also represent a first step toward overturning the tyranny of a mode of economic thinking that systematically obscures what should be readily apparent. Keynes railed against the conventional economic wisdom of his own day for advocating austerity, balanced budgets, and patience when he saw a clearer path to recovery. "It is a far greater exercise of the potency of an idea to exorcise the obvious," he argued, "than to introduce into men's common notions the recondite and the remote." The unnecessary human suffering caused by the current recession is a pathetic tribute to the potency of the same mistaken ideas that Keynes brilliantly criticized in the 1930s. □

From Hope to Uncertainty

Danny Rubinstein

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In the beginning, there was hope. On Friday, October 24, 1991, at six o'clock in the morning, the members of the Palestinian delegation to the negotiations for a peace settlement with Israel assembled in the lobby of the National Palace Hotel in East Jerusalem. Early morning, a small, Arab hotel on a side street, a commotion of Palestinians, newsmen, onlookers: In retrospect, this was perhaps the most moving scene of the peace process.

The delegates were accompanied by several dozen advisers. These were relatively young people, almost all lacking political experience. They gathered with their families—wives, husbands, children, parents, brothers, and sisters. Some had come with neighbors and friends. An old Arab man dressed in traditional peasant clothes, leaning on a crude cane, led a group of women wearing embroidered peasant dresses. This procession was escorting Salah Abu Laban, a young man from the refugee camp of A-Daheisha, south of Bethlehem. The old man, Abu Laban's father, together with the women of the family, held his son by his elbows and led him along as though he were a groom being led to the bridal canopy. They threw flowers and fragrant green sprigs at him. The women cried out. The young man's face was inscrutable and serious. It was obvious that he was not accustomed to wearing a suit and tie. When he was younger, he had thrown a hand grenade at an Israeli patrol and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He spent more than ten years in jail and was released in a prisoner exchange between Israel and Jibril at the end of the war in Lebanon. The old man guided his son toward the head of the Palestinian delegation to the talks, Dr. Haider Abed el Shafi of Gaza, who was standing on the steps of the hotel. In a commanding voice, Abu Laban's father proclaimed, "Go forth and bring us peace. But we demand a just peace." "Yes, a fair peace, an honest peace!" the escorts repeated in chorus. One of the journalists asked the old man where he was from. "We're from the village of Zakariya [now an Israeli cooperative village near Beit Shemesh]. More than forty years ago, we lost our homes and our lands. If God wills it, there will be peace and we shall return to Zakariya and live in tranquility with our neighbors. We've had enough of living as refugees." Several of the people surrounding him wept.

The Israeli poet Chaim Guri once said that if we reduce the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the simple human level, it becomes intolerable. The old man from A-Daheisha, the head of the Abu Laban family, was sending his son to the peace talks in the hope that he would return the family to their house and land in Zakariya.

In the crowded lobby, people greeted each other, embraced, kissed, laughed, and cried. One could hear fragments of farewell blurted out in excitement and in flowery language. "We are depending on you...." "Be strong!" "The fate of our people is on your shoulders." When they began loading the suitcases onto the bus taking them across the bridge to Amman, a group of women chanted in rhyme. "We shall live to see our flag waving high. Oh, Abu el Abed"—the name by which Faisal Husseini is more popularly known—"lead us faithfully as did your heroic father." (Husseini's father was killed in a battle on the road to Jerusalem during Israel's War of Independence in 1948.)

When the time came to get on the bus, the group arranged itself, as though in a roll call, on the steps leading out of the hotel. Amil Ashrawi, husband of the delegation's spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, waved to the crowd. Elias Freij, the mayor of Bethlehem, shook hands with his son. Someone began singing the anthem, "My country, my homeland. I have loved you. I have given you my heart." Many raised their arms, their fingers forming the victory sign "V." Drivers honked their horns in glee. Israeli soldiers and policemen on the sidelines watched with expressionless faces as the bus carrying the hopes of the Palestinians set out to deliver them to the bargaining table.

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Then there was pride and anticipation. When the delegation returned via the Allenby Bridge, Radwan Abu Ayash, chairman of the Palestinian Association of Journalists, later told me that when the bus entered Jericho, a group of youngsters jumped on the windshield. One of them, a boy about ten years old, reached into the bus, grasped his hand, kissed it, and called out, "Oh, Abu Ayash, Palestine has returned to us." Ayash had not known what to reply. After the Madrid conference, expectations among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were so high that it was difficult to restrain them. Abu Ayash admitted that even he had begun to hope that perhaps this boy from Jericho would grow up a free man.

During those early days of negotiations every foreigner or journalist in Nablus, Gaza, or East Jerusalem heard people asking each other, with a tone of pride in their voices, "What did you think of the Palestinians at the conference? What kind of impression did they make?" What they were really saying was, "You see, we proved that we have representatives who can appear in a dignified manner in front of the whole world." In many homes, Palestinians videotaped whole scenes from the television coverage of the conference. Shops near Nablus Gate sold videocassettes of Ashrawi's press conference and Shafi's opening speech. During the intifada, families had made great efforts to buy home videos with which to while away the time during the long strikes and curfews. Now video technology provided much more than idle diversion: Palestinians were able to see their representatives as major players in international diplomacy and to relive the excitement the arrival of the Palestinian delegation aroused in Madrid. In such moments their shame disappeared and their suffering subsided. Their future looked bright. The owner of a newspaper kiosk near the Arab bus station opposite Nablus Gate in East Jerusalem announced to anyone who would listen: "God willing, my brother will be released from prison now. There will be no more roadblocks. The border police won't harass us anymore." At the nearby office of the newspaper *El Fajr,* an editor explained, "Of course, expectations are high. We need peace more than anyone. Israel is strong and will manage. The Arab states will also manage. But if we—Palestinians—don't have peace soon, we're finished."

Upon their return from Madrid, the members of the delegation and their entourage organized mass meetings to publicize the details of the conference. "We have accomplished something," they announced. "We have achieved international recognition. We have coordinated our positions and reached an understanding with the Arab states. We have erased the negative image that has stuck to us because of our support of Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War." In an attempt to win support among the Jewish public, groups of Arab youths handed out olive branches to Israeli soldiers.

At a mass meeting at the huge refugee camp, Balata, near Nablus, the Palestinians dared to raise their flag in the middle of the football field. The principal of the local school opened the proceedings by reading portions of a well-known poem written by Mahmoud Darwish, a member of the PLO leadership.

> My grandfather was a peasant,
> Without lineage or pedigree,
> Who taught me the dignity of the soul
> Before he taught me to read!
>
> I am from a forgotten village
> Whose streets have no names....

Every Palestinian child knows these verses by heart. The participants at the meeting then stood at attention in memory of their fallen heroes. Zahira Kamal, a chemistry teacher and feminist activist in the Territories who had been appointed to the delegation, addressed the crowd. Before this audience she was able to discard the guarded language of diplomacy for more blunt and direct speech. "We are all PLO agents. We are all PLO," she called out to the audience. "The intifada broke out here, among you. You are its pioneers!" Hundreds of youths from this camp and from the surrounding villages had served prison sentences for security offenses. Many had been wounded and killed; some had been maimed for life. There were years when the days of curfew in the Balata camp were more numerous than the days of freedom.

But Kamal and the other delegates also had to defend themselves against accusations and embarrassing questions from the young members of the intifada whom they congratulated in their speeches. After all, the Palestinian leadership agreed to begin the negotiations without the participation of the PLO or representatives from East Jerusalem, while failing to secure a commitment from Israel to cease its settlement of the West Bank. Some had seen this as a sacrifice of principles. Cries of "Don't agree to autonomy!" rose from the audience. To which the delegates replied: "We are not talking about autonomy. We are only talking about a transition period before our statehood." The refugees in Balata also demanded that their right to return to Palestine not be negotiated away. "That is our holy right," they were reassured from the podium. "No one will relinquish that right."

When the negotiations began, Palestinian support of the peace process was almost unanimous. Indeed, ever since the intifada reached its height, the Palestinians

have made known their willingness to enter peace talks with Israel. At a meeting of Palestinian peace activists in East Jerusalem, one participant offered this analysis: "The intifada did for the Palestinians what crossing the Suez Canal did for the Egyptians in 1973. It demonstrated that it is possible to challenge the Israelis. It brought them worldwide recognition. It provided evidence of their ability to fight back. The intifada created pride and self-confidence in the capacity of the Palestinian people to negotiate from a position of strength rather than weakness."

The same activists who had organized and fought in the intifada now were urging support for the peace process. This posture was not merely the outcome of the intifada's long struggle to win political legitimacy: It also represented the ascendancy of two new leading forces in Palestinian political life. In trying to learn who is responsible for Palestinian political activity in the Territories, one often hears the joke, "The head is the head of Bir Zeit and the hands are the hands of Jibril's released prisoners." Bir Zeit is the Harvard of the Occupied Territories. Officially, the university remains closed by an order of the Israeli military government because its faculty and students are considered hard-core intifada activists. And indeed the two most prominent members of the delegations bear Bir Zeit credentials: Shafi serves on Bir Zeit's board of governors; Ashrawi is a lecturer in English literature for the university. Many of the advisers and aides who accompany the delegation on a permanent basis are also on the faculty and administrative staff of Bir Zeit. And Bir Zeit is but the most renowned of the twenty universities in the West Bank and Gaza founded since the 1970s, whose students and faculty have made up a solid core of thousands of political strategists and activists.

The other major group of Palestinian leaders bears strikingly different credentials: They are the prisoners released in the Jibril deal. These are mostly men in their thirties and forties, like Salah Abu Laban, the delegate whose father saw him off at the National Palace Hotel. Until he went to Madrid, Abu Laban had never been farther away from his camp than the Israeli security prison seventy miles from his home. Suddenly he found himself, for the first time in his life, traveling abroad in an airplane, sleeping in a hotel, and conducting formal diplomatic negotiations. Many other prisoners-turned-peace-delegates also shared Abu Laban's exhilarating sense of being in a world of new possibilities—indeed a majority of the Palestinian delegation had spent time under detention in Israeli jails.

(Continued on p. 86)

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New World Seder

Ira Steingroot

Fifteen Passovers ago, I put out my first small display of haggadot on the corner of a table at Cody's Books in Berkeley, California. Since then, that first selection has grown to half a dozen tables full of every conceivable haggadah—from the mainstream Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist versions to humanist, egalitarian, feminist, lesbian, secular, socialist, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, children's, vegetarian, Chasidic, Holocaust, Christian, ecumenical, kabbalistic, and large-type haggadot in every language from English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino to Russian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese—not to mention heavily annotated and artistically embellished haggadot, plus cookbooks, children's Passover stories, audio and video tapes, software, and even an inflatable "matzoh" beach ball.

It isn't just the great foods and copious amounts of wine, the familiar songs and stories, the comfortable home setting, or the laughter and tears of bittersweet memories of Passovers past that make us want to attend a Seder every year. The story of the Exodus epitomizes the Jewish experience in history: strangers in a strange land, enslaved, persecuted, genocide in the offing, and then, miraculously, freedom and departure for our own land. The Holocaust and the subsequent creation of the State of Israel are only the most recent enactment of this central myth of our people.

Animistic, cultic, political, and spiritual elements are all wrapped up in the celebration of Pesach. Of course, we all want to eat and drink, to sing and laugh, but we also want to remember why we are celebrating. The following group of haggadot, by no means definitive, will provide much food for thought for your prepared table, whether you use them as primary texts or as supplementary material. As the Haggadah tells us, "The more anyone discusses the Exodus from Egypt, the more praise they deserve."

Tikkun Passover Haggadah Supplement. This four-page pullout series of inserts to some of the traditional prayers of the Seder speaks about our origins as slaves and our awareness of others' enslavement, awareness of the earth when we bless the fruits of the earth, sympathy for our enemies when we reduce the fullness of our cup of celebration, and acceptance of our uniqueness and of our legitimate anger at our historical mistreatment. *Insert after page 32 in this issue of* Tikkun.

The Feast of Freedom. This is the current Conservative haggadah from the Rabbinical Assembly, and it's full of bold, colorful graphics à la Matisse and Sonia Delaunay. The text goes a long way toward nonsexist language. The most exciting parts are the supplementary materials, comments, and stories from the whole Jewish experience. Here Maimonides links up with the Holocaust and Shimon Grilius tells us what they put in their Hillel sandwich in a Soviet labor camp. *United Synagogues of America Book Service, 155 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.*

The Santa Cruz Haggadah. A wise and witty compilation put together by Karen Roekard of Santa Cruz, a kind of "Mr. Natural comes to the Seder" haggadah. Roekard provides spiritual guidance on how to put aside *chometz* —which she defines as habitual patterns of thought and action that enslave us—in order to depart from Mitzrayim, the narrow place of our own self-limitation. Text and illustration work together for both sincerity and light-heartedness. There is a small participants' copy and a larger, more annotated leaders' copy. *Karen Roekard, Hineni Consciousness Press, 1840 Forty-first Avenue #102-286, Capitola, CA 95010.*

Haggadah for a Secular Celebration of Pesach. Put together for the Sholem Aleichem Club of Philadelphia in 1975, this haggadah emphasizes Yiddish culture through wonderfully relevant selections from Sholem Aleichem, I. L. Peretz, and Yiddish songs of celebration and resistance. The simple graphics and calligraphy are something like Ben Shahn and the whole production is one of the most charming of small haggadot. *Sholem Aleichem Club, 443 East Wadsworth Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19119.*

The Moss Haggadah. Not too expensive at $175, this is one of the most beautiful works in the history of the Jewish book. But there is more here than sumptuous illustration and masterful calligraphy. Every bit of decorative elaboration that David Moss put into his manuscript is linked to a resonant knot of Jewish thought, emotion, and experience. Every manuscript tradition of the past is referred to and then extended;

Ira Steingroot is a free-lance writer on jazz, Judaica, and the arts. He works at Cody's Books in Berkeley, California.

for instance, the birds of the *Bird's Head Haggadah* are in a cage whose door is the Auschwitz gate. This is a work of genius that will repay close study. *Bet Alpha Editions, P.O. Box 20042, Rochester, NY 14602.*

Haggadah of the Chasidic Masters. There are a number of Chasidic haggadot—Breslov, Lubavitcher, etc.—and all have points to recommend them. This one presents a traditional haggadah straightforwardly along the upper half of the page, with analogous stories of the great zaddikim along the bottom half of the page. *Mesorah, 4401 Second Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11232.*

The Haggadah of the Liberated Lamb. Micah Press publishes two versions of this, one in Hebrew and English and one in English only. It is a vegetarian haggadah, but there is much here of interest to anyone concerned about the way our culture treats animals and the earth. Instead of conquering nature, this haggadah seeks to liberate the Paschal Lamb. *Micah Publications, 255 Humphrey Street, Marblehead, MA 01945.*

A New Haggadah: A Jewish Lesbian Seder. Judith Stein manages to retain the traditional structure of the Seder while successfully introducing material relevant to Jewish women in general and Jewish lesbians in particular. *Bookpeople, 2929 Fifth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710.*

On Wings of Freedom: The Hillel Haggadah for the Nights of Passover. Finally, this popular haggadah done by Rabbi Richard Levy for the Hillel Foundation is clearly presented in Hebrew and a new English translation along with a fair amount of transliteration. Running along with the text are about fifty fresh comments that amplify the Haggadah in light of the civil-rights campaign, the ecology movement, the Holocaust, pacifism, and other relevant issues. *Ktav, P.O. Box 6249, Hoboken, NJ 07030.* □

The Long Ride to Silwan

Gila Svirsky

I have been doing this for several months, ever since the settlers had eviction orders served on five families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. I sit in the homes of the Palestinian families for an hour or two, three days a week. It's not how I prefer to spend my afternoons.

The visit always begins at the central bus station, where I catch the #1 bus. Bus #1, like so many mundane objects and acts in Israel, has taken on symbolic—indeed, mythic—significance far beyond its designated function. The route for bus #1 was renewed after the Six Day War, and the bus carries its load of passengers to the Kotel (the Western Wall)—the epitome of mundane objects that have taken on symbolic meaning in our national life. Bus #1 moves directly from the central bus station into the ultra-Orthodox part of town—first Geula, then Mea She'arim, and from there it circles the wall of the Old City to approach the Kotel through the Dung Gate.

I sit on the bus, often the only nonreligious passenger in the crowd, and try to contain the anger I feel toward the ultra-Orthodox: my anger that they refuse to pay taxes, but benefit from all the services that my taxes pay for; my anger that they refuse to serve in the army, but benefit from the protection that our children in the army risk their lives to provide; my anger that they hate the very existence of the State of Israel, but control (inter alia) the powerful Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Knesset Finance Committee, and the Ministry of Absorption, with its vast influence over the education of several hundred thousand new immigrants in Israel. But—my anger reminds me—this is peanuts compared to the role of the ultra-Orthodox in determining who will be the prime minister, which party will form the government and its strategy on war and peace, whether there will be electoral reform, who is a Jew anyway, and a host of religious coercion laws that have enacted restrictions on everything from access to abortion to the sale of pork. How did we ever get into this medieval mess?

And as I work on my anger—which only sharpens its edge—I am also struck by the humanity of the religious families who share my bus: the mother in perfect control of her six children (the oldest of whom cannot be more than four years old, I swear); the young boys who rise reverently for their sage-looking elders; the young girls who squeeze together—three to a two-person seat—to allow the men to sit separately from them; and the niceness (this is the word) of the only bus

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A Jewish settler hauls a sandbag down to a former Arab home in Silwan while Israeli border policemen keep the peace.

drivers in Israel who pause between stops for passengers to enter or alight. Bus #1 lurches me from anger to warmth to anger again, and the more I travel its route, the more I lose my balance.

As we leave Mea She'arim, the bus begins to circle around the walls of the Old City, facing the Mount of Olives, and I am smitten once again by these hills and their ancient monuments. My eyes try to pick out my grandparents' graves, two white specks among thousands dotting the stone-cluttered terraces. And against the backdrop of these hills embedded with memories and promises engraved in stone, a young boy wields an olive branch to guide his flock of sheep around the Tomb of Absalom, Walkman strapped to his ears; Russian Orthodox priests scurry into their onion-spired churches; and pilgrims make their sandaled ascent into the city, pausing just inside the Dung Gate to check their maps for the Kotel, the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The chill of the late afternoon, or something, has me trembling.

Inside the gate, the bus flaps open and the ultra-Orthodox exit like a flock of birds, lifting off toward the Kotel. I turn the opposite way, feeling not a little awkward at the gesture (symbol) of disloyalty, and make my way back through the Dung Gate to descend to the Silwan neighborhood. I pass through checkpoint after checkpoint of soldiers who ask me, "Where are you going?" and I have finally learned to give the answer that gets me through: "To a friend." What answer would deny me entry—"To an enemy"?

The settlers milling around watch me carefully, recognizing that I am another Jew, waiting to see whether the direction of my walk will brand me an ally or a traitor. When I turn toward a Palestinian home marked for eviction, I can only imagine the look in their eyes.

The settlers have occupied some homes entirely, have taken over rooms of others, and want to purchase still more. Most of these homes were sold to them by the government agency that lays claim to them, in defiance of their longtime Arab owners. One Arab owner sold his house to settlers; now he keeps out of sight of his former neighbors. The so-called High Court of Justice will settle contested claims of ownership. But the settlers are not about to rely on the courts; they alternate threats with offers of money, cars, and women (!) to encourage Palestinians to sell or leave their homes. I enter one of the homes that the settlers have targeted, that of the Shabani family.

I am no more at home here than I was on the #1 bus. The family is very nice and appreciative of the Jews who come by to express solidarity with them. But this is not my people, this is not my culture. Weedad Shabani is fifty years old, close enough to my age so that we feel affinity for one another. When she makes tea for everyone, she is careful not to sweeten mine too much. But

I am not comfortable enough to tell her that I do not drink tea at all, nor the coffee that I politely sip, nor do I eat the sweets that taste like wax inside my mouth.

I spend an hour talking with Weedad about the latest convolutions in the court case they are hoping will prevent their eviction from a home they have rented for twenty-five years. "What do they want inside the Arab neighborhood?" Weedad asks me. "We have not made trouble for the Jews. Why don't they just let us live in peace here? They have enough land, enough houses. Why must they take mine?"

As a young woman, Weedad had been a stewardess for Jordan's Alia Airlines and can speak to me comfortably in English or French. Weedad has seen the world, she understands the meaning of symbols in the Middle East, and she appears willing to play the role into which she has been thrust. I am beginning to think that we have a great deal in common. And then during one of my visits to her home, she takes me into an inner room and shows me a huge mural covering the wall, a painting of a young man lying in a field, blood oozing from his chest, his head turned so that his blue eyes are focused directly on the viewer. "My son," she says proudly, "eighteen years old. He was martyred by the soldiers three years ago." I am dumbstruck. Weedad is smiling, and I feel that I have gone too far by stepping into this room. This is not only sad, I think, this is creepy. I am not into martyrs.

I politely ask how it happened, and Weedad explains that her son was coming home from work when he was caught in a crossfire of soldiers and *shebab*—the young men who are the stone-throwers of the intifada. A newspaper photographer took his picture as he lay dying, and the mural is a copy of the photograph. She pulls the photo from behind a candy dish, and I see a miniature of the mural, incredibly showing the blood oozing from his chest and his dying blue eyes staring emptily at the camera. "Very nice," I say, wondering at my words. "Thank you," she answers, and we return to the front room.

From Weedad's home, I sometimes walk deeper into Silwan to Moussa Abassi's home, now reduced to three small rooms since the settlers have taken over the large part of the house. Moussa, in his early forties, was a municipal worker in Jerusalem, but has been unable to function since the traumatic night when, at 3 A.M., Israeli soldiers evicted him, his wife, and his seven-year-old son from the large home that he believed he owned. I saw the son a week after he was gruffly awakened from his sleep, dragged into the cold Jerusalem night, and told that he could not return to his bed, his

(Continued on p. 88)

There Is Good News About Jews and Arabs in Israel!

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Beyond Beef

Jeremy Rifkin

Human beings have forged a unique relationship with cattle throughout history. We have prayed to these animals, sacrificed them to the gods, and used them to provide food, clothing, shelter, traction, and fuel. They have enriched our spiritual lives and fed our appetites. We have elevated them to divine status, yoked them to the plow to turn the soil, milked them to provide nourishment for our young, and eaten them to gain strength and energy.

Much of the religious and secular life of Western civilization has been erected on the broad shoulders of these powerful ungulates. For most of recorded history, human beings prayed to bull gods and cow goddesses. They were the progenitors of creation. They represented generativeness, virility, and fertility. Cattle also represented wealth: The word "cattle" is derived from the words "chattel" and "capital." The devolution of cattle from the status of divinities to the status of currency and commodities serves as a historical mirror to our own changing relationship to nature.

The great European and American cattle complexes have played a pivotal role in determining the shape and direction of Western history. But today cattle raising is responsible, in part, for the mushrooming environmental, economic, hunger, and health crises facing human civilization. The 1.28 billion cattle that now populate the earth consume enough grain to feed hundreds of millions of people and occupy nearly 24 percent of the landmass of the planet. The ever-increasing cattle population is wreaking havoc on the earth's ecosystems and destroying habitats around the globe.

Cattle raising is a primary factor in the destruction of the world's remaining tropical rain forests. Millions of acres of ancient forest in Central and South America are being felled and cleared to make room for pastureland to graze cattle. It has been estimated that for every quarter-pound of hamburger made from Central American beef, fifty-five square feet of tropical rain forests are destroyed. One consequence of this is the destruction of some twenty to thirty plant species, and dozens of species of birds, mammals, and reptiles.

The destructive impact of cattle extends well beyond the rain forest to include vast stretches of the earth's grasslands. Cattle are now a major cause of desertification. Each of the millions of cattle grazing on semiarid and arid lands eats its way through nine hundred pounds of vegetation each month. Without plants to anchor the soil, absorb water, and recycle nutrients, the land has become increasingly vulnerable to wind and water erosion. The grazing of cattle has left parched and barren deserts on four continents.

Cattle raising imperils not only plant and animal life but pollutes and massively depletes water supplies. Raising cattle requires vast amounts of water: To produce just one half-pound steak takes hundreds of gallons of water. Nearly half the water consumed in the United States is now used to grow feed for cattle and other livestock. In the United States, cattle produce nearly one billion tons of organic waste each year and account for more than half the toxic organic pollutants found in fresh water.

Cattle contribute significantly to global warming, both indirectly and directly. Over the last decade, the burning of Amazon forests for grazing has released billions of tons of carbon dioxide, one of the main gases responsible for the "greenhouse effect." Through their digestive processes, cattle emit methane, one of the most potent of all greenhouse gases. The world's cattle release approximately sixty million tons of methane into the atmosphere each year—12 percent of all methane produced annually.

The beef addiction of the United States and other industrialized nations has set off a global food crisis. Today hundreds of millions of cows are being fed precious grain so that American and European consumers can

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Jeremy Rifkin is an author and activist best known for his environmental work and his critique of modern science and technology. This essay was adapted from his book Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture *(Dutton, 1992).*

enjoy the pleasures of beef "marbled" with fat. Cattle and other livestock consume more than 70 percent of all the grain produced in the United States and about one-third of the world's total grain harvest—while nearly one billion people around the world suffer from chronic malnutrition. We could feed most of these hungry people if we used the world's agricultural lands to grow food for human consumption rather than feed for cattle and other livestock.

While millions of human beings go hungry for lack of adequate grain, millions more in the industrial world die from diseases caused by an excess of grain-fed animal flesh, especially beef, in their diets. Americans, Europeans, and increasingly the Japanese are gorging on grain-fed beef and dying from the "diseases of affluence"—heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. According to a report by the U.S. Surgeon General, more than 70 percent of deaths in this country—over one and a half million each year—are related to diet, including the overconsumption of beef and other saturated fats. New studies are showing that consumption of red meat is causing significant increases in heart attacks, colon cancer, and breast cancer. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that contamination of beef by pesticides accounts for 11 percent of the total pesticide-related cancer risks to consumers from all foods on the market today.

Although cattle production and beef consumption now rank among the gravest threats to the future well-being of the earth and its human population, changing our diet will not be easy. Beef consumption has long been used as a class marker, dividing the rich from the working poor. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it evoked a powerful image of success and status, not unlike the symbolic role played by automobile ownership today. For waves of European immigrants—most of whom had little occasion or opportunity to eat beef in their native lands, where it was reserved for the tables of the aristocracy and the merchant class—the beefsteak and the juicy chop were every bit as much a token of wealth as the starched collar or top hat. It was common among the better-off laborers of nineteenth-century America—the "labor aristocrats"—to invest a large portion of their newly attained wealth in beefsteaks. In some of the trades, immigrant laborers flaunted their newly attained status as "American working men" by eating a steak for breakfast every day. Many immigrants viewed entrance into the beef culture as an essential rite of passage into the American middle class, the most coveted of all goals. Being able to afford a steady diet of steaks and roasts provided a kind of psychic insurance, an acknowledgment that one had indeed arrived and become a part of the "good life." Commenting on the failure of European socialism to gain a significant foothold in America, the German economist Werner Sombart blamed the problem on the fact that American laborers enjoyed three times the amount of beef as German workers. He wrote, "On the shoals of roast beef and apple pie, all socialist utopias founder."

Today, beef eating continues to serve as a visible sign of wealth and prestige, even among nations. Entrance into the global beef club represents power and is a significant factor in determining a nation's status in the international community.

Moving beyond the beef culture will require a fundamental challenge to the age-old dietary myths that have perpetuated the beef mystique in Western history. We can afford nothing less if we are to have any chance of saving the world's forests and grasslands and protecting the health and well-being of future generations.

Reconsecrating our relationship to the bovine and making a personal and collective choice to significantly reduce beef consumption will have global consequences. Reducing beef consumption will help to restore ecosystems on every continent, save rain forests, and allow eroded land to regenerate. The strain on the world's freshwater reserves will be reduced. The emission of greenhouse gases will decline.

Reducing the consumption of beef will dramatically reduce the incidence of heart disease, cancer, and strokes. Millions of human beings will enjoy better health and a longer life span. Billions of dollars in health-care costs will be saved. As the demand for beef wanes in the industrial nations, agricultural land will be freed up in the developing countries to grow food for human consumption. The transition from export feeds to local food production will make precious grain available to millions of malnourished human beings around the world. Finally, by reducing the consumption of beef, our species will take a significant step toward establishing a new relationship to cattle and other sentient creatures based on an appreciation of their intrinsic value rather than merely their utilitarian value.

Among the steps that you can take to reverse the destruction wrought by the beef industry are: Reduce your consumption of beef by at least half; push for a 50 percent reduction of beef in school cafeterias, and secure pledges from students to reduce their beef consumption by at least that amount; encourage local restaurants to reduce beef dishes on their menus by at least half; and lobby supermarkets to sell only beef that has been raised humanely under strict organic standards. □

Religion in
Should We Celebrate

Have we been too successful in keeping religion out of the schools? Any American Jew who went to public school in the and celebrations. Joseph Preville celebrates the Jewish role in securing Court decisions that forced a rigid separation. ill-equipped to teach values. Separation of church and state is the most agreed upon cause in the liberal Jewish agenda.

American Jews and the Religion Clauses

Joseph Richard Preville

"Is ours a Christian Government?" asked attorney Louis Marshall, in a critical essay he published nearly a century ago. This question may sound anachronistic to many contemporary civil libertarians. But now, as then, it occupies a central position in the long-contested terrain of American church-state relations.

Marshall posed his question on the heels of Supreme Court Justice David Brewer's astonishing claim that "this is a Christian nation" in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States* (1892). For American Jews, Brewer's remark represented a singular disappointment, carrying a painful message of second-class citizenship.

The challenge that Brewer's claim posed to American Jews was to prove a fateful part of the twentieth-century legal dispute over the place of religion in public life. The battleground for this controversy was the establishment clause of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Through its historic rulings in *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940) and *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Supreme Court firmly established that the religion clauses of the First Amendment applied not only to the federal government, but to the states as well.

These two decisions ushered in a new era in American constitutional jurisprudence on the relationship between church and state. The American Jewish community played a pivotal role in this litigation; indeed, since the end of World War II, no other group in the United States has offered a more persuasive case for religious liberty and the strict separation of church and state.

We find a classic statement of the Jewish posture on church and state in the amicus brief submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court by the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) and the Synagogue Council of America (SCA) in *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948). *McCollum* presented a constitutional challenge to a program in the Champaign, Illinois public schools that had Catholics, Protestants, and Jews give weekly religious instruction to students.

Leo Pfeffer, a gifted young attorney with the American Jewish Congress (AJC), drafted the brief. Its analysis in many ways anticipated his career as American Judaism's leading legal spokesman on the church-state question. The brief provided a thoroughgoing defense of the separationist viewpoint and vigorously pleaded that American public education should remain secular:

> We regard the principle of separation of church and state as one of the foundations of American democracy. Both political liberty and freedom of religious worship and belief, we are firmly convinced, can remain inviolate only when there exists no intrusion of secular authority in religious affairs or of religious authority in secular affairs. As Americans and as spokesmen for religious bodies, lay and clerical, we therefore deem any breach in the wall separating church and state as jeopardizing

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Joseph Richard Preville is a San Francisco writer and historian who is presently writing a biography of American Jewish Congress attorney Leo Pfeffer.

the Schools
Church-State Separation?

nineteen thirties, forties, or fifties can remember how oppressive it felt to be forced to participate in Christian prayers Yet the unintended consequence, argue Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman, has been to create an educational system Dare we consider, ask Mensch and Freeman, that the rigid separationists have taken us in a mistaken direction?

Losing Faith in Public Schools

Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman

Recently a colleague confided to us that she had removed her children from public school and enrolled them in a Catholic school. She is a decidedly lapsed Catholic and her husband a Lutheran, but neither objects to having their children learn the rosary so long as they also learn basic moral values like respect and concern for others. In their fancy suburban public school district, teachers assiduously avoid questions of morality. The dominant culture teaches rampant consumerism, and parents and teachers encourage academic achievement only for the sake of career.

Her experience resonates with our own. Our young children attend a private school that is committed to diversity, where a nonsectarian but pervasive religiosity is allowed to flourish. The school's Thanksgiving ceremony, for example, would probably have been illegal in a public school: The headmaster emphasized our shared obligation as parents, teachers, and students to create a "loving community." Learning, he said, is not just cognitive; it means learning to give to others. The student body president then described "giving" as an affirmation of our belief in human goodness, even in the face of the sin and brokenness we find in the world around us, and in our own hearts as well.

Originally we planned to transfer our children to public school after preschool: Private schools seemed by definition antidemocratic. But now we wonder. Alexis de Tocqueville, for one, saw religious values as crucial to democracy, though he also praised America's separation of church and state. Through their religion, Tocqueville wrote, Americans learned the meaning of a civic responsibility that did not become idolatry, and a freedom that was not undisciplined greed.

American neighborhood schools were once intended to be helpmates to local churches in the moral training of the young. As recently as 1979, the Supreme Court affirmed that a "state properly may regard all teachers as having an obligation to promote civic virtues and understanding in their classes, regardless of the subject taught." Since the 1960s, however, the Court has also insisted that those virtues be neutral with respect to religion, and that insistence has created a bracing challenge: How can schools teach the values rooted in our religious traditions without teaching religious values? To teach values as autonomously secular seems not only dishonest but ultimately destructive: By aggressively severing values from their religious roots, an exclusively secular values curriculum becomes, in effect, antagonistic to religion. Such antagonism is no more consistent with the establishment clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution, which requires government neutrality toward religion, than the nineteenth-century conception of public schools as helpmates to local churches.

The starkly secular character of public education became a matter of constitutional mandate when, in 1962 and 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the official reading of a nondenominational prayer and the reading of Bible passages (without commentary) as part of opening exercises. Neither practice could be saved by provisions allowing students to excuse themselves from

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participation, reasoned the court, for coercion is not the issue. It is the very fact of public (governmental) religious expression that triggers the constitutional ban.

Nevertheless, concluded the court, schools could still "teach about" religion, but not "promote" it. Thus the Bible might be studied for its "literary and historic" qualities, if "presented objectively as a part of a secular program of education." Religion as religion was out, but not religion as literature or history.

To liberals in the sixties, and to many Jews who have been in the forefront of enforcing those decisions, the distinction between "teach about" and "promote" appeared both logically compelling and easy to apply. Schools were viewed as an extension of state power rather than as benign, autonomous "mediating structures" located, like churches, somewhere between state and individual. Active state promotion of religion seemed obviously inappropriate and especially threatening to anyone who did not share the dominant Christian faith.

The fear of teaching values is now so great that a mother reported to us that her son's publicly funded preschool would not use the word "wrong" even when one child clobbered another.

In practice, however, the facile distinction between "promotion of religion" and general education has proved elusive; the "neutral" space where schools are neither promoters of religion nor antagonists to it may be nonexistent. By insisting on the vigorous application of this doctrine, Jews may have simply effected a minority holdup of the dominant culture, one that has ill served the long-run need to teach values in public schools.

Details of curriculum and teacher conduct must now be scrutinized lest they run afoul of establishment-clause doctrine. For example, in a case recently affirmed by the United States Court of Appeals in Colorado (December 1990), Kenneth Roberts, a fifth-grade teacher, was told by Principal Kathleen Madigan that he could not read silently from his Bible while his class had its "silent reading period" (the students could choose whatever they wished to read), nor could he keep his Bible visible on his desk. Moreover, he was ordered to remove two books, *The Bible in Pictures* and *The Life of Jesus,* from the classroom library of 239 books he had accumulated over a nineteen-year teaching career. Left alone were other books in the same library dealing with Greek gods and goddesses and American Indian religions. Playing their characteristic role with respect to church-state issues, national Jewish organizations (such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Congress) had submitted amicus briefs in support of the prevailing side of the Roberts case.

The American Jewish Congress also supported the winning side (in the lower courts) in *Weisman v. Lee,* currently before the U.S. Supreme Court. Deborah Weisman, a student, objected to the program at her junior high school graduation in Providence, Rhode Island. The objectionable feature was Rabbi Leslie Gutterman, who offered an "invocation" addressed to "God of the Free, Hope of the Brave," and a "benediction" that began, "O God, we are grateful to You. . . ." Toward the end of the benediction, he called on students "to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly," a paraphrase of Mic. 6:8.

Both the district court and the court of appeals (by a two to one vote) concluded that "a benediction invoking a deity delivered by a member of the clergy at an annual public school graduation violates the Establishment Clause." The example is a telling one, since symbolic or ceremonial events are traditionally subject to less constitutional scrutiny than the day-to-day curriculum. As a result, teachers are tempted to steer clear of religious subject matter altogether.

Public schools are not consistent in their interpretation of the Supreme Court's mandate. Many principals simply ignore constitutional requirements; others, often at the behest of vocal Jewish minorities, are overzealous in guarding the wall of separation between church and state, and this in turn can stifle the teaching of values. To say to a student that a particular act is "wrong" is to invite the question, "Says who?" and any attempt to answer that question is fraught with church-state dilemmas. The fear of teaching values is now so great that a mother reported to us that her son's publicly funded preschool would not use the word "wrong" even when one child clobbered another.

When educators self-consciously strive to be "value-neutral," students apparently receive the message. In *Education for Character* (Bantam, 1991), Thomas Lickona tells of a Harvard professor who discovered in trying to teach about the Holocaust that his students had a "no-fault" view of history. They believed that Nazism was inevitable, so that nobody was responsible for its rise, or for preventing it. Nazism, along with its ugly consequences, was simply an "amoral" fact of history.

TIKKUN
Passover Haggadah
Supplement
1992

Have you ever been to a boring Passover Seder where people mechanically read through the text? This happens only because many of us have abandoned the tradition of heated argument and discussion about the meaning of the stories connected with Passover. In fact, from the time that Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans to the moment that inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto celebrated the Seder before beginning their historic revolt, the Jews have used the Seder as a time to grapple with their current reality—applying the message of the historical struggle against the Pharaoh. It is in this spirit that we encourage you to make any Seder you attend a lively and spirited occasion to address the problems of the present moment in light of the lessons of our past. This year particularly the Jewish people must address its relationship with the Palestinian people.

Detach these additions to the haggadah along the perforation and bring them with you to your Seder. They are meant to be read as additions to the normal text at the places indicated. But, of course, you can add them elsewhere if you wish.

Kiddush

Before the Kiddush (the first blessing over the wine).

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who have kept alive the vision of freedom inherent in the Passover story. We proudly affirm that we are the descendants of slaves—the first group of slaves in recorded history ever to wage a successful rebellion against their slaveholders. Ours was the first historical national liberation struggle, and the prototype of many struggles that other nations would wage against those who oppressed them.

There are others who would have done their best to forget their humble past. There are other peoples who saw themselves as descendants of gods or of superhuman heroes. We are proud that our people has clung to its vision of itself as a slave people and has insisted on telling its story of liberation as the central founding event around which our culture was built.

Ruling classes have traditionally tried to convince their subjects that domination is inevitable and is built into the very structure of the universe. The Jewish people's Torah, telling the story of our liberation struggle, has been a perpetual thorn in the side of these ruling classes. Not only was our very existence a proof that the world could be changed, but every Passover, and every Sabbath, we insisted on recounting the story and drawing the lesson: The way things are is not the way things have to be; the world can be radically altered. No wonder that the constant recounting of our struggle for freedom has predisposed Jews throughout the ages to support the liberation struggles of other oppressed groups. While there have been Jews in every age who thought that they best served the interests of our people by cuddling up to the powerful and allying with them, most Jews have rejected this strategy and instead have sought ways to ally themselves with the oppressed.

In recent years the Jewish people have themselves become the symbol of oppression to another people: the Palestinians. Happy as we are that this past year we have witnessed

the beginning of U.S.-sponsored peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, we are painfully aware that the Israeli government continues to reject the very notion of exchanging land for peace, continues to spend huge sums of money to build new settlements in the West Bank, and continues to rule over one-and-a-half million Palestinians who plead with the Jewish people for their own right to national self-determination. We would never support a solution to this problem that endangered the existence of the State of Israel, but neither can we remain silent year after year as the Palestinian people continue to live under conditions that would be unacceptable to us, some in conditions of harsh occupation, others in refugee camps in the Arab world where they are used as pawns by Arab states who care little about their plight, still others in diasporas around the world yearning for a homeland just as we Jews once yearned for our own return to Zion. Their liberation and freedom can and must be achieved without harm to the safety, security, and freedom of the Jewish people—but we cannot close our ears to their cries and their pain.

In meeting here tonight we are reaffirming our commitment to a progressive Judaism—one that embraces our own tradition but affirms the validity and wisdom of many other traditions as well. We are not afraid to assert that within Judaism there are riches worth preserving, and even worth teaching to those from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. We welcome to our Seder those who have come to learn, and we commit ourselves as well to using this next year to deepen our own understanding of this tradition. Ours is a tradition of *tikkun olam*—global healing, repair, and transformation. Our spirituality is one that affirms this world, affirms the importance of the struggles for peace, justice, equality, and human dignity, and affirms that all human beings are made in the image of God and are partners with God in creating the world. Yet we also affirm a God of the universe who transcends all that which is, the God who is the force that makes possible the transformation of the world from that which has been—the various forms of slavery and oppression—to that which ought to be: a world of freedom, liberation, and mutual caring and respect. Tonight we recommit ourselves to the inner struggle to know God more deeply and the outer struggle of tikkun, of healing and repair in the world. Our Passover story reminds us that it is all possible. Passover is a rejection of cynicism and a reaffirmation of our highest hopes for each other and for the world.

Bless the Vegetation of the Earth in Times of Ecological Crisis

Add to the section where we dip the parsley or greens of the earth in the salt water and say the blessing boray pree ha-adamah.

Our holiday of freedom is also a time to rejoice in the bountiful blessings of the earth. The earth pours forth its riches, allowing us and a myriad of God's creatures to flourish and enjoy the splendor of life. Each spring we witness the miracle of renewal as vegetation returns to the planet.

This Pesach we pause to reflect on the ways that we have failed to take adequate care of the earth. The free market, in a relentless fury to amass profits without regard for ecological consequences, has generated tens of thousands of corporate ventures and products that have done incalculable damage to the life-support systems of the planet. Willing to let corporate concerns for profit count more than the general interest, we have restricted our attention to a narrow focus on recycling and becoming ecologically sensitive in our personal lives, ignoring the larger destruction of the earth that we presume we are too powerless to stop.

Our biblical injunction to work and to exercise stewardship over the earth has been transformed into the idea that the earth is simply a resource for exploitation. If we construct a society in which people are encouraged to look out for themselves and advance their own interests without regard for the consequences to others, an ecological crisis becomes almost inevitable.

As Jews, however, we recognize that our own fate is closely connected to the fate of others. The peasant in Brazil who has no other way to make a living but to cut down the rain forest, the Japanese fisherman who has no way to live but to harvest the sea, or the auto manufacturer who uses political clout to block funds for mass transit or for stricter environmental policies—all are acting rationally, given the logic of the competitive marketplace. Nevertheless, their actions have dire consequences for the rest of us. Our task is not to put these people down, but to construct an economic and social system in which people no longer have to choose between their own best interests and the best interests of the environment. This is not a question solely of learning as individuals to be more ecologically aware—although this is also important—but of transforming the social system that makes it possible for some people to profit from activities that destroy or endanger our planet Earth.

We approach the earth not only as our sustainer, vital to our survival, but also as a sacred place, worthy of

our respect and awe. The Bible teaches us that the whole earth is full of God's glory—that every part is alive, holy, and miraculous. Today, as we rededicate ourselves to saving the earth from the ecological damage that has been done, we also rejoice in the earth and thank God for its beauty and wonder.

Blessed are you, God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Drops from Our Cup of Joy

Before reciting the Ten Plagues.

It is traditional to spill a drop of wine from our cups as we recite each plague. Our cup of rejoicing cannot be full if our enemies are suffering. The Talmud recounts that when the heavenly angels sang songs of praise to God as the Egyptians were drowning in the Sea of Reeds, God reprimanded them for celebrating the suffering of his children the Egyptians.

Our cup of joy also cannot be full this year. The tragedy of the destruction of European Jewry seemed to bring in its wake a new redemption: the creation of the State of Israel. But that new homeland, a renewal of ancient dreams, has been restored to us at the expense of another people. The hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled in the midst of an armed struggle in 1948 have turned into millions of people, many living in refugee camps, most desiring to return to their homeland. A million and a half Palestinians now live under the direct military rule of the Israeli army.

Our people did not return to its ancient homeland with the intention of displacing or oppressing another people. The historical responsibility for the tragedy is two-sided; when we were refugees fleeing from the oppression of Christian Europe, the Palestinian leadership did all it could to block our return and refused to consider sharing the land. When the UN offered a two-state solution in 1947, Israel accepted and the Palestinians refused. Yet most Palestinians who fled were not involved in these decisions; they were peasant farmers with little knowledge of or involvement in the affairs that would eventually lead to displacement from their homes.

Our tradition teaches us compassion—and from this teaching we can also learn that if we really want peace in the Middle East, we will have to approach the conflicts with compassion for all sides. Peace is impossible as long as we hold on to the idea that one side has all the good and the other has all the bad.

Nor can our cup of joy be full when so many people around the world and in our own country suffer from economic deprivation, homelessness, hunger, and poverty-bred disease. A rational ordering of the world's productive capacities could eliminate much of this suffering and prevent the deaths of tens of millions of people who die each year from starvation. As long as the world's resources are not allocated in a rational, just, and humane way, we drop wine from our cup of joy.

In Every Generation

After reading vihee she'amda *(that in every generation there have been those who rose up against us, but God ultimately saved us from their hands).*

Why the Jews? Why should we have been the subject of persecution for thousands of years?

Was it perhaps our exclusiveness, our separateness, our insistence on being special—or some other aspect of our internal collective pathology? No!

To counter this, we affirm our Jewishness today. We have not been the cause of our oppression. We have been a very convenient tool for various ruling classes: a separable and recognizable minority that could be used as a scapegoat, a convenient target upon which to vent their hostility.

Jews have not been the only scapegoats to be used in this way. But in Western Europe they were the primary and most consistent scapegoat.

Our target status was largely responsible for our headlong rush into assimilation once that was legally possible. The Judaism that was abandoned, full of tears and suffering, was a Judaism whose sense of joy and inner confidence had been replaced by a narrow defensiveness—itself a response to external oppression. Even Chasidism, born as a protest against the joylessness of a rigidifying Eastern European Judaism, eventually lost much of its spontaneity and its earlier creativity,

increasingly reproducing the dogmatic spirit it sought to replace. It is only now, decades after one-third of our people was wiped out, that we can begin to imagine reclaiming the more joyous and life-affirming aspects of our Jewish heritage.

Yet even here we are not free of the dynamics of world oppression. In class societies, virtually everyone is enmeshed in a web of oppression, in some respects by forces outside our control, in some respects by participating and benefiting from the oppression of others. Whether as tax collectors and small tavern owners in Eastern Europe, or as shopkeepers, government bureaucrats, social workers, and teachers interacting with people in American ghettos, Jews are sometimes perceived as representatives of the established order in their dealings with other oppressed groups. In the process, and quite unfairly, anti-Semitism is regenerated. It is understandable why we Jews would become angry at the groups who participate in these dynamics—the peasants in Eastern Europe or some African-Americans in the U.S. We wish that they would understand that we too are victims, yet it's understandable why they may see us otherwise.

Similarly, when people point to the relative material prosperity of Jews compared to other ethnic groups in the U.S. and use this as a reason to claim that Jewish oppression is a matter of the past, they fail to understand the history of that oppression. Jews were doing well from a material standpoint in prewar Germany as well. Anti-Semitism, like sexism, cannot be reduced to an economic category—there are other unique forms of oppression besides material deprivation. Jews who sympathize with the oppression of every other group but who have little understanding or knowledge of the history of their own people may be engaged in a massive denial of reality. This denial is sometimes inspired by internalized anti-Semitism and the resulting need to convice oneself and one's non-Jewish friends that Jewishness "really isn't very important," and that it's "really just an interesting historical relic of the past."

There is no easy way out, no way for one people to make a separate peace with a world of oppressors, or to assimilate successfully and without moral compromise into that world. Our own liberation and our own mental health require the liberation of all and the end of all oppression.

Pour Out Thy Wrath

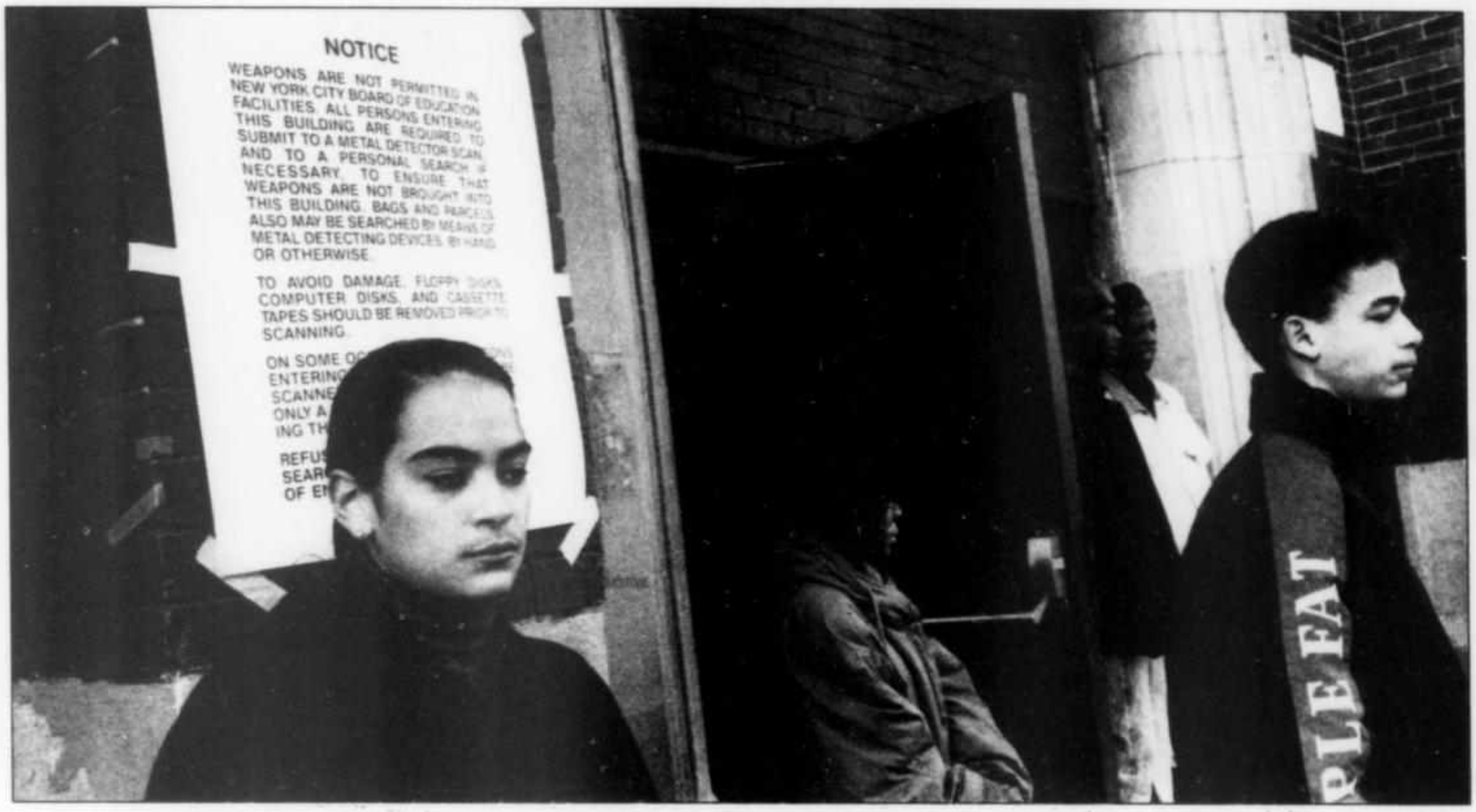
After the meal, before opening the door for Elijah and before saying Shefokh Chamatkha.

Tonight we remember our six million sisters and brothers who perished at the hands of the Nazis and at the hands of hundreds of thousands of anti-Semites who assisted those Nazis throughout Europe. We remember also the Jewish martyrs throughout the generations—oppressed, beaten, raped, and murdered by European Christians.

It's not fashionable to speak about these atrocities—particularly since some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate the current oppressive tactics of the Israeli government. But tonight we recall in pain and in anger what was done to our people. We do not think it appropriate to use this past as a blank check to justify what right-wing Jews do to others. Yet we understand the pain that has led many of our fellow Jews to be deeply suspicious of a non-Jewish world that turned its back on us at the moment we were being systematically annihilated.

To get beyond the pain, we must first be allowed to express our anger. Permitting ourselves to articulate our anger, rather than trying to bury it or forget it or minimize it, is the only way that we can get beyond it. So, tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history, about the Holocaust, and about the ways that the American government and peoples around the world failed to respond to our cries and our suffering. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, and an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God. It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out *Shefokh Chamatkha ha'goyim aher lo yeda'ukha,*—pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings.

Yet, even as we speak our anger, we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, a world in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, a world in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday. □



Sign of the times: Should students turn their backs on schools that teach rules instead of values?

This stark separation of "fact" and "value" derives primarily from the post-Enlightenment positivist assumption that only facts have objective existence. It found its fullest expression in twentieth-century analytical philosophy, which argued that both morality and religion are merely "emotive," matters of subjective "feeling" or "opinion." The analytic school, as aptly characterized by philosopher and historian Alasdair MacIntyre, regards "moral commitment as the expression of a criterionless choice" between "incompatible and incommensurable moral premises" for which "no rational justification can be given."

That supposed split between fact and value is by no means undisputed. It runs counter to the long natural-law tradition of discovering objective values in human nature itself. In both its secular and religious versions, natural law formed the background for the eighteenth-century legal order ("We hold these truths to be self-evident") and is now seeing a philosophic revival in neo-Aristotelian virtue theory and communitarian political thought. In other words, a school's decision to teach facts as separate from values is *not* neutral—it means taking a stand on a hotly disputed issue in current theology and moral philosophy, a stand with arguably corrosive effects. While parents and churches remain "free" to teach morality to their children, the implicit message conveyed by the schools is that parents are then teaching only their own "emotive" opinions, not objective truth.

Any school system that tries actively to teach values, however, faces a daunting intellectual (and constitutional) challenge. Under current law, public schools must opt for an ethics that does not depend on religion. The easiest option is simply to institute "rules" with no supposed moral grounding—which of course conveys the message that the only reason for obeying the rules is to avoid punishment. Few schools (or cultures) are capable of inflicting enough punishment to maintain order on that basis alone. Moreover, such a regime is hardly value-free, since its implicit message is that arbitrary authority is its own excuse for being.

Academic philosophers might suggest that we turn to Kantianism and utilitarianism as readily available sources of secular, rational morality. These positions, however, are subject to all manner of logical refutation, not least because they are incompatible with each other. More to the point here, however, is MacIntyre's convincing account of how those Enlightenment rationalist traditions derived their operational moral content from various forms of the Judeo-Christian worldview—e.g., Lutheranism for Kant and Calvinism for Hume. Similarly, the current philosophic move toward neo-Aristotelianism, while taking avowedly secular forms, is rooted in the long Thomist natural-law tradition—the fusion of Christianity and Aristotle that formed the basis for much of our ethical heritage.

MacIntyre's historical account of how rationalist morality arose out of particular religious traditions finds its sociological counterpart in contemporary America.

Most Americans (more than 95 percent) believe in God and seek their values in religious sources; this suggests that the secularism of those born in the 1940s and 1950s may be a fast-fading blip on the screen of history. Many regard the very notion of a totally nonreligious morality as alien, shallow, and unable to speak meaningfully to the dilemmas of ordinary life.

Perhaps schools should ignore the question of morality's ultimate source and appeal instead to consensus, thereby teaching our shared core of values in secular terms. There are two problems with that approach. First, the appeal to consensus (as opposed to objective truth) implicitly concedes the modernist intellectual insight that an objective moral order is impossible and adopts the relativist position that morality is whatever a particular culture defines as its value system.

This leads to the second major problem with any appeal to secular consensus, which is its nonexistence. On some of the most pressing issues of justice (affirmative action, gender equality), personal freedom (premarital sex, homosexuality, family structure, artistic expression), and even life and death (euthanasia, abortion, capital punishment, environmental ethics), Americans are deeply divided. Moreover, according to a number of scholars (see, for example, James Hunter's *Culture Wars,* Basic Books, 1991), that division represents a widening gap between more orthodox or fundamentalist religious worldviews on the one hand, and those that see themselves as religiously modernist, or simply secular, on the other. To insist that values be taught from a supposedly "shared secular perspective" loads the debate in favor of the secularists and excludes the orthodox, who insist that many of these issues cannot be discussed apart from theology. On the other hand, a consensus approach might shun controversy altogether. The result would be a suffocatingly bland education that flies in the face of pedagogical wisdom: One learns moral sensitivity only by taking on hard questions, not by repeating unobjectionable clichés.

Many who advocate a return to teaching values are looking not to consensus, but to an implicit natural law, which assumes that we can derive universal norms from the essential nature of human beings, and that we can reason about the fulfillment, in time, of human potential, purpose, and meaning. The natural-law tradition presupposes the need for rules to guide the development of a moral sensibility. It also requires careful analogic reasoning—by reference to category, exceptions, conditions, and the natural and social world. The label for such reasoning is casuistry, which has unfairly been given a bad name. During the Gulf War, for example, it was reassuring to hear theorists debate the morality of the war in terms of reasoned moral criteria—justice of purpose, as further conditioned by weighing the consequences of war, by exhausting best efforts to avoid violence, etc. Such criteria provide a baseline of decency, a hedge against the wanton exercise of power, while also acknowledging that moral norms like "do not kill" must be subject to exception. Similarly, reasoned criteria for evaluating personal behavior operate as a constant check on unrestrained egoism, self-gratification, or bigotry.

Lickona, for example, whose program of values education fits this model, would distinguish between essential norms of human decency and respect, not to be questioned, and areas of wide disagreement as to realization of those norms, where serious debate is to be both accepted and encouraged. Thus his take on teaching about homosexuality: Lickona would insist that one should "require all citizens, regardless of their private views of homosexuality, to respect the civil and human rights of homosexual persons." He would make it equally clear, however, that "one cannot in fairness accuse someone of being a bigot because that person, in good conscience, makes the judgment that homosexual activity is not healthy or right behavior. The ethical obligation to treat every person justly does not mean that one must approve all of a person's behaviors, sexual or otherwise."

Fundamental to natural-law theory is the ontological assumption that there *is* an objective human nature, along with a morally purposeful natural order, from which our well-schooled reason can discern basic human values. That assumption is of course at odds with the postmodern message of freedom and contingency. Even earlier, it had been shattered not just by the epistemological skepticism of the Enlightenment, but by the Protestant Reformation, which assigned a primacy to faith that necessarily reduced the claims of reason and law. Teaching natural-law precepts appears neutral and nonreligious because of the Thomist assumption that one can distinguish those ethical commands God has specially revealed to the faithful from those that can be known to all through the exercise of natural reason. Arguably, however, that assumption itself is peculiarly Catholic.

Jewish ethical thought, in its carefully reasoned methodology, often seems similar to Thomism, yet the underlying assumption is radically different: The law is a special gift from God to His people, and Righteousness lies precisely and exclusively in fulfilling the obligations of the law He has given to us. Thus James Hunter quotes Orthodox Rabbi Yehuda Levin:

> Being Jewish means a total surrender of my intellect to God. In other words, God tells me what's right

and what's wrong. I may attempt in my limited capacity to try to understand that, but I have to start from the point that I am surrendering my personal intellect to God.... God said, "Thou shalt not steal" and so I don't steal—not because crime does not pay, but because God said not to steal. [Likewise with abortion] I do not need any proof that [the fetus] is human. In fact, if somebody somehow would bring proof positive—scientific evidence—tomorrow that the fetus is just a glob of gelatin or something like that, it would not in one iota change my view on abortion.

(In contrast, Catholic doctrine views abortion as a violation of natural law, understood as such through the exercise of reason, and not dependent upon the revealed word of God.) Thus, to suppose a "natural," universal ethics separate and independent of God's direct command is to suppose a profoundly non-Jewish ethics.

The Protestant tradition shares with Judaism an emphasis on surrender to God as the primary ethical requirement. Some Protestants have rejected natural law altogether, while others followed Calvin in accepting its existence, but remain doubtful about how much moral guidance a fallen human reason could find in a fallen natural order. The Reformation represented a return to biblical sources, the true Word of God, and was in that sense a rejection of the Thomist natural-law tradition. In turning to Scripture, however, the Reformers sought the transformative power of the gospel message. With their intense emphasis upon sin and the need for faith and salvation through Christ, they sought righteousness, not in following God's law (which a sinful human nature would be forever incapable of fulfilling) but rather in God's promise of forgiving grace. Faith would lead to righteousness, experienced not as rigid adherence to scriptural law, but as a new and loving relationship with God and within the human community.

Protestant theology, as exemplified by practitioners like Karl Barth or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, emphasizes the stark reality of sin and grace, describes a world that is more dialectical and paradoxical than the self-contained world of Aristotelianism, and reminds us that the Gospel message cuts through time and space. In concrete ethical application, however, the Protestant tradition, with its insistence on context, on particular cases rather than universal rules, runs the risk of being incomprehensible to those outside the tradition, or being reprocessed, as it was in the sixties, into a "situation ethics" that is virtually indistinguishable from secular utilitarianism.

Thus, even when Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant ethics offer similar answers to particular moral problems, the illusion of consensus is belied by the radically different notions of moral truth that inform those traditions. In addition, there is a vast realm of difference within each as to specific moral norms, the legitimacy of reinterpreting traditional rules to fit changing circumstances (e.g., on abortion or homosexuality), and overall accommodation to modernist sensibility. In fact,

Growing Up Without Religion

I grew up in a suburb:
roast chicken, meatloaf, mashed potatoes,
overcooked vegetables, the green beans a limp brown.
My grandmother still cooked Jewish,
but she also told gypsy fortunes
and became a Christian Scientist
as soon as she got cancer.
She had a very optimistic cancer
til she died.
My mother practiced her own brand of personal voodoo,
making my dead grandfather her bloodthirsty
stone idol that answered her prayers
and if he didn't it was our fault.
My father was an atheist
who sent money to Israel at the Yom Kippur war,
but the rest of the time he talked centrifuges
and recombinant DNA at the breakfast table
and we all learned how to react
by the tone of his voice.
My sister worshipped horses
and spent all her time riding.
I spent all my time pretending
I wasn't anything I'd been born.
I wasn't related to my family.
I didn't live in that house.
When I read sci-fi I'd pretend I wasn't human.
It never occured to me to pretend I wasn't Jewish
because it never occured to me to pretend I was.
That sort of suburb.
And when the sirens went off in Jerusalem
I huddled in front of the radio
as if I were rocking the Jewish child I never was
bleeding in my arms,
calling me by name.

Julia Vinograd

Hunter suggests that the split between "orthodox" and "progressive" visions, America's current "culture war," is far more important than sectarian differences within each type of vision.

Taking both into account, one finds, even within the Judeo-Christian tradition, a pluralistic array. If not to teach values at all is to imply (non-neutrally) their objective nonexistence, and if value-teaching is empty and distorted without reference to religious sources, how can one contend with the cacophony of pluralism?

One familiar answer is to steer a middle and inoffensive—but not wholly secular—course by relying on America's traditional "civil religion," the basic core of values shared by (at least mainstream) Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Instead of quibbling over precise sources of moral authority, it is argued, we should affirm our shared belief in a God who is abstract enough to obfuscate sectarian difference. Recognition of "civil religion" has been advocated by both Christians and Jews, such as sociologist Robert Bellah and Reform Rabbi (and liberal political activist) David Saperstein.

However appealing, the civil-religion approach, at its worst, creates the blandness of the 1950s "Protestant/Catholic/Jew" imagery of Will Herberg, in which all three religions became little more than alternative ways to celebrate being American. In the effort to flatten out difference, religion loses the distinctive appeal to truth that makes it a source of moral authority. This may well be the lesson of the continuing appeal and pervasive vitality of more orthodox outlooks. Moreover, "civil religion" in its content often appears indistinguishable from mainline Protestantism (with a niche available for Reform Jews). The result is not only presumptuous and elitist, but directly contrary to the actual conditions of pluralism.

Those committed to a single faith tend to believe, as did John Courtney Murray (the great Jesuit theologian and proponent of religious liberty), that "pluralism may be a fact of history, but it is against the will of God." Paradoxically, to teach values credibly we must affirm the reality of pluralism, while acknowledging that basic moral values are rooted in visions of truth. To affirm *only* pluralism is to affirm nothing but postmodernist fragmentation. This is the danger of the most radical versions of multiculturalism: Pluralism becomes not an enriching inclusion, but internecine warfare, with each heritage claiming its own privileged access to truth. In rightly challenging the exclusive privilege and complacent power of dominant culture (be it Right, Left, or center), radical multiculturalism threatens to make power the only arbiter of truth.

In our own (tentative) version of an ideal values curriculum, we would, perhaps faintheartedly, attempt to have it both ways. We would affirm the civil-religion tradition as the core of the American heritage, forthrightly describing key examples such as the Christian themes in Lincoln's speeches: How else can one understand their appeal? Nor would we hesitate to teach as "our" shared values those that are explicitly rooted in the civil-religion tradition. To do otherwise is either to teach no values, or to teach "community values" without being honest about their source. Yet we would also point out ways in which the country has fallen short of its highest ideals, including ways in which civil religion can become an excuse for arrogance, oppression, and exclusion (e.g., the smug conventionality of the 1950s that produced such excesses as "Kill a Commie for Christ!"). The goal would be to recognize tragedy and sin in American history without thereby inducing loathing for the best of our Judeo-Christian tradition. No culture can survive on self-loathing alone.

We would, however, vigorously celebrate pluralism by also allowing various religious voices to speak for themselves. At SUNY Buffalo, Oren Lyons (a Native American spokesperson) is often asked to speak in classes because he conveys so effectively the power of Iroquois traditions and values. We would use that approach as a model, exposing students to speakers who could convey the spirit of their own religions in their undiluted particularity. Such a program would include not only the mainline Protestant, Reform Jew, and liberal Catholic, who are least offensive to secular sensibilities, but also the fundamentalist Southern Baptist, the Orthodox Jew, the Black Muslim, and traditionalist Catholic. It also means including some from outside the Western tradition, as well as those who are ready to denounce all religion as outmoded superstition with a sexist and violent history.

We are convinced that a robust encounter with religion offers the vigor and intensity that should inform our quest for value and that religion remains, in our culture, the natural language of virtue. Furthermore, exposing children to various religions might dispel prejudice, especially across the great divide of our current "culture war." Students from secular liberal backgrounds need exposure to the transformative power of both centuries-old traditions and evangelical fervor; and students from more orthodox backgrounds need exposure to "liberal" theology's courageous struggle to deal with a "world come of age" and a pluralist reality. Right now there is too much pride on each side of the divide. Students (and all of us) could use a dose of humility, which may be the beginning of a responsible ethics. □



"I haven't seen JFK, *but I suspect the whole fuss comes from simple-minded people looking for conspiracies because they can't handle the complexities of politics." This response is as likely to arise on the Left these days as on the Right. Such thinking comes in part out of the fear among former social-change activists that reminding themselves of how democratic politics in this country has been subverted—from the Kennedy assassination to Watergate to the Iran-Contra scandal—will force them to rethink the various life-choices that led them away from political involvement. One need not endorse the particular details of Oliver Stone's explanation of the Kennedy assassination to realize that some version of a conspiracy theory may be more consistent with the facts available today than any version of the "lone assassin" theory.*

Peter Dale Scott, in the provocative interview in this special section, provides us with a state-of-the-art account of the forces that were likely at work in providing the background from which the assassination and its cover-up emanated. But we are equally interested in the political meaning of the desperate attempts to discredit Stone's movie, which reflect not only the continuing cover-up, but also the need to contain and repress the excitement and vitality that swept this country in the sixties and have never been fully extinguished.

JFK and the Possibility of Possibility

Michael Lerner

The central political issue in America is this: Will people feel empowered and mobilized to engage in political activity to change society, or will they leave politics in the hands of established elites who shape public opinion and determine political outcomes? *JFK* the movie, like JFK the president, has generated fierce attacks precisely because each, in very different contexts, threatened to mobilize and empower.

Through three decades of depression, war against fascism, cold war, and McCarthyism, the elites that governed America had managed to fend off all serious critiques of their system of power, to significantly weaken and demobilize the labor movement, and to erect a seemingly seamless celebration of American civilization in the 1950s. All the more striking, then, that some sectors of the country's ruling elites began to suspect in the early 1960s that the president of the United States might himself be interested in challenging the existing social order—and to fear that his presidency was already generating social turmoil that might return the country to the more turbulent politics of the 1930s.

Leftist critics of *JFK* entirely miss the point when they insist that the actual John F. Kennedy was never interested in challenging the existing inequalities of wealth and power, despite his interest in socialist author Michael Harrington's bestselling book *The Other America*. True enough, Kennedy was a loyalist to the system who used the issue of a missile gap to win election. But the "capital strike" against him that produced a recession in his administration's early years may have sobered him and made him resent what entrenched interests could do to weaken his presidency. And in the days after the Bay of Pigs fiasco he eventually came to understand and resent that he was being manipulated and lied to by Pentagon officials. Kennedy's attempts to strike an arms-reduction agreement with Khrushchev made many in the arms community fear that he was in fact moving toward ending the cold war; by the fall of 1963 his speeches seemed designed to create a climate of public opinion receptive to such a development. When he refused to recognize Latin American dictators who had recently come to power through military coups, and announced plans to withdraw troops from Vietnam, the

Michael Lerner's indictment as part of the "Seattle Seven" for his role as a national leader of the antiwar movement, and the sworn testimony by J.Edgar Hoover claiming that he was "one of the most dangerous criminals in America," were later shown to be part of the systematic, covert campaign by the FBI to disrupt and destroy the antiwar movement (cf. COINTELPRO Hearings of the U.S. Congress, 1976).

nation's ruling elites may have been that much more inclined to believe that somehow a radical reformer had slipped into the most powerful position in America.

That elites of wealth and power may have wildly overreacted, that they may have seen in Kennedy's youth, his Catholic religion, and his alliances with civil-rights forces signs of a radicalism that he never possessed, may tell us something about their own failure to understand how powerful their own system really was. Anyone who later heard Attorney General John Mitchell describe the 1970 peace demonstration as something reminiscent of the storming of the Winter Palace in the 1917 Russian Revolution may recognize that those in the centers of power sometimes see their system as more vulnerable and less entrenched than those of us who have been struggling to change it. Many have argued persuasively that had Kennedy lived, he would have proved a force for social stability and moderation, and that his loyalties to American imperial interests would eventually have become less equivocal.

Defeating the spirit of optimism was the most important victory America's ruling elites could engineer—in many ways far more important than winning the war in Vietnam itself.

But this still misses the political meaning of the Kennedy presidency. Whatever Kennedy's ultimate intentions, he built his campaign and his presidency by forging a new optimism and idealism that encouraged Americans to believe that their lives ought to be dedicated to creating a just and humane society. Kennedy's speeches and his aliveness (and, yes, even his only partially contained sexuality) had communicated a new sense of possibilities to the population—most notably the possibility that life would not be only about survival but also about some higher meaning and purpose. Kennedy unleashed expectations he could not, and perhaps never intended to, fulfill. The hundreds of thousands of us who gathered for the March on Washington two months before Kennedy was assassinated and who listened to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech would never have assembled had we not believed that Kennedy needed to be pushed—or given support—to stand up for principles that he himself had articulated. Kennedy created the perception that his administration was seeking to mobilize Americans to build a new society based on mutual caring and dedication to principle—and this perception, far more than the details of what Kennedy actually pushed for in Congress or in the executive branch, far more than what he actually favored doing in Vietnam, defined what Kennedy was to most Americans. If those who conspired to kill the president were in fact the people that Peter Dale Scott claims them to be in his interview on page 40 of this issue of *Tikkun,* they were *not* mistaken to view Kennedy as a threat—not because of what he believed but because of the hopefulness and optimism that he had unleashed.

It was precisely this optimism, this spirit of possibility, that was the central threat to the elites of wealth and power in the 1960s, and squashing that spirit has been the central issue of American politics ever since. And this is perhaps the most powerful, though rarely drawn, "lesson of the sixties"—that America's ruling elites are prepared to adopt any political program or demand, short of sacrificing their disproportionate share of the wealth and power—*as long as they do not, in the process, empower people to believe that they can and should be involved in the process of shaping reality.* The country's ruling elites concluded after the Tet Offensive in 1968 that the U.S. needed to get out of Vietnam, even if it meant ceding the area to the Communists. But they could not leave as long as they feared that withdrawal from Vietnam might encourage the antiwar movement to make ever more sweeping demands to limit America's imperial ambitions. Similarly, once the civil-rights movement had effectively dissolved, parts of its program could more easily be adopted as national policy. Every struggle for reform in America in the past decades has actually been two struggles: one about the substance of the demand, the other about how much giving in to a particular demand would encourage people to continue to struggle for something more.

The decisive victory for ruling elites was in the dissolution of the sixties movements, which represented the most serious challenge to the establishment's hegemony since the 1930s. The spirit of possibility and hopefulness that grew out of the mass perception of the Kennedy years led to an infectious optimism that swept millions into its embrace. Defeating that spirit of optimism was the most important victory America's ruling elites could engineer—in many ways far more important than winning the war in Vietnam itself.

The defeat of these movements, though partly a product of a systematic campaign of FBI-sponsored dirty tricks and repression, was ensured partly by the way movement activists turned on each other in a PC frenzy of self- and other-blaming. Having created

utopian criteria for who was a "good enough" social-change activist, we discovered that none of us was free enough of racism, sexism, egotism, or self-interest to withstand the ferocious self-criticism that became the central dynamic of movement life in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The spirit of openness, trust, self-confidence, and optimism that had made the movement feel so inviting in the early sixties gradually evaporated. Even the most dedicated activists withdrew, tired of being denounced for providing leadership or for having ideas or for being white or for being heterosexual or for wanting to have a family or for being male or for worrying about a way to make a living. Most still retained their analysis of what was wrong in society, but they no longer believed that *they* could be the ones to change things. They continued to oppose the evils they had seen, but opposition was now a matter of internal consciousness rather than public social activism.

Ever since Watergate, ruling elites have recognized the changed circumstances and no longer feel the need to deny the existence of fundamental problems in our society. Rather, it was sufficient to reinforce the perception that the only possible change would occur through the self-corrective mechanisms of ruling elites, that social movements would always lead to frustration and self-defeat, and that the only wise thing for people to do was to take care of number one and let the larger social reality continue to limp along as it always had. One retained one's "consciousness" but abandoned any form of activism.

In short, we enter the era of the *New Republic*—the quintessential expression of elitist cynicism parading as wisdom and maturity. We are encouraged to see through everything, but to believe in nothing, to imagine that there is nothing worth taking risks for, that anyone who pursues a political vision with passion must necessarily be a fanatic, and that the best thing to do is to view the whole world with a detached and ironic bemusement, armed with clever dismissive turns of phrase and sophisticated excuses for noninvolvement. In the world that the *New Republic* consciousness helped to shape, spiritual and moral values and commitments are steps toward Khomeini-ism, but irony and brilliant cynicism are the new forms of secular salvation.

Given this outlook, I predict that the ferocious attempts to discredit Oliver Stone's movie will soon be abandoned, and instead Stone will receive prizes and Academy Awards and we will be told that he has done us all a great service, that the truths in the film have been acknowledged and incorporated into our public understanding, and that, yes, maybe there really once was a conspiracy, in long-ago times when cold wars roamed the earth. Congressional files will be opened—though as Peter Dale Scott points out, these are not the important files, and even should these other files be opened we are likely to "discover" that the key information has "mysteriously disappeared" or "been lost."

Or perhaps the ruling elites will find themselves saved by the popularization of postmodern consciousness that deconstructs the category of conspiracies and doubts that there is any coherent history that could allow for explanation. How chic to doubt that history could be anything but a series of accidents and coincidences, that there is no "they" with manipulative (or certainly not conspiratorial) intentions, because there is no "we" to be manipulated. How fashionable to doubt the possibility of meanings in history—and how ultimately demobilizing and consonant with existing systems of power. The spirit of irony, of "no answers," of the proliferation of difference without any criterion for truth or goodness may in the long run be the most effective way ruling elites can ever find to get themselves off the hot seat of critical scrutiny. Tellingly, all these approaches to culture have been popularized by refugees from the social-change movements of the sixties who have given up on the possibility of transformative political action; thus such approaches are uniquely suited to serve as the most important weapon of demobilization and disempowerment yet conceived.

So why the brouhaha about Stone's film? Because for one moment it put people back into the consciousness of the sixties, back before deconstruction and irony and cynicism and pessimism had triumphed, and back into remembering how good it felt to see the world from the standpoint of hope, possibility, and an empowering commitment to principle. Granted, Stone never understands the power of social movements, never depicts them in anything but a caricatured way, and instead embodies the spirit of the age in the crusading person of Jim Garrison. Yet nevertheless Garrison embodies in the film that sense of empowered outrage that made him feel entitled to seek the truth and courageous enough to take risks to change a reality he found appalling. It was that spirit of empowerment that gripped millions of people in the sixties, and what is most important about the film is the degree to which it reminds us of how good and whole it was to have those feelings.

Yet we are all well defended against those feelings. We have all made our accommodations with an America bereft of social movements and communitarian hopes. We all have built lives based on the probability that nothing like the sixties will ever happen again, and hence that nothing much better than what is happening now will ever happen. To the extent that we feel that way, we hasten to remind ourselves that "it was only a movie,"

become fascinated with the details of where Stone went wrong—or even with the details of where he is right, because being a conspiracy buff can be just another way to escape facing the feelings of possibility that the film momentarily evokes. Those feelings—the feelings that we can be historical agents again, that the world really is not fixed, that there are really millions of other people around us who know that something is fundamentally wrong and want things to be different—are both exciting and deeply frightening. No wonder, then, that so many people are fascinated by *JFK* and yet desperate to remind themselves that it's not really real. □

The Assassination and the Cover-up: What Really Happened?

An Interview with Peter Dale Scott

Tikkun: What's your understanding of why there is so much controversy around the film *JFK*?

Peter Dale Scott: As an artist in touch with his own inner craziness, Stone has reached and stimulated the craziness of the country. He has touched an area of denial where this country has been involved in a collective suppression of some very sensitive truths. One is that the president was killed by a conspiracy. Another is that his death has had enormous political consequences—even though we all pretend that it made no difference and that we can all lead our lives as if our political process were working normally. More specifically, the assassination changed the direction of U.S. policy in Vietnam.

Tikkun: What makes you think that Vietnam policy changed?

Scott: We didn't know it at the time, but the Pentagon Papers, leaked to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in 1971, revealed two critical National Security Action Memoranda (NSAMs). In the first, Kennedy's NSAM 263 of October 11, 1963, the president ordered the "implementation of a plan" for withdrawing a thousand U.S. troops from Vietnam by the end of December 1963, as the first stage of a plan to withdraw the bulk of U.S. troops by the end of 1965. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's military recommendations, which were approved in this NSAM, included a program to train Vietnamese "so that essential functions now performed by U.S. military personnel can be carried out by [the] Vietnamese by the end of 1965, [and] it should be possible to withdraw the bulk of U.S. personnel by that time." And here we are not talking of the language of hopes and objectives, but of the implementation of a plan. But the American people never knew about NSAM 263 until the Pentagon Papers, so they didn't know of this secret implementation, which was annulled by NSAM 273.

On November 24, two days after the assassination, NSAM 273 was approved, though it was later dated November 26. NSAM 273 quietly overrode the Kennedy plan. Instead of reaffirming the order implementing troop withdrawal, it subtly reverted to an earlier, publicly stated "objective" of getting the troops out. Of course, no one wanted the troops there forever, so the objective of getting them out was shared by all sides, including Johnson and Nixon through all the years they escalated the struggle in various ways. What was overridden in NSAM 273 was the actual implementation of a real plan to get the troops out. Instead, NSAM 273 authorized plans for a direct United States role against North Vietnam, and this violated the Kennedy guidelines, which had always been that the U.S. was there in an advisory role. Johnson, on the other hand, wanted a U.S. commitment to *win* the war by whatever means it took—a commitment that Kennedy turned down in 1961 and again in October 1963. The Pentagon

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Peter Dale Scott is professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley. His book The Politics of Escalation *(Beacon Press, 1966) was one of the first to document the systematic deceit of the American people by the Johnson administration as it escalated the war in Vietnam. He has published numerous articles and books including* Cocaine Politics *(University of California Press, 1991), on the relationship between the CIA and drug traffickers. Oliver Stone cited his research on the Kennedy assassination in the* New York Times *op-ed piece he wrote defending himself from his critics.*

bureaucracy understood the meaning of this change—that after NSAM 273 the U.S. was in to win the war and not just to help the South Vietnamese government.

Of course, this shift in policy direction did not become clear to those outside the Pentagon until later. Kennedy had planned to delay implementing the bulk of the withdrawal until after the 1964 election, and Johnson delayed the bulk of the escalation until after he was reelected. Both of them felt that the Vietnam issue could work against them in a presidential election, so neither wanted to show fully what he was planning to do.

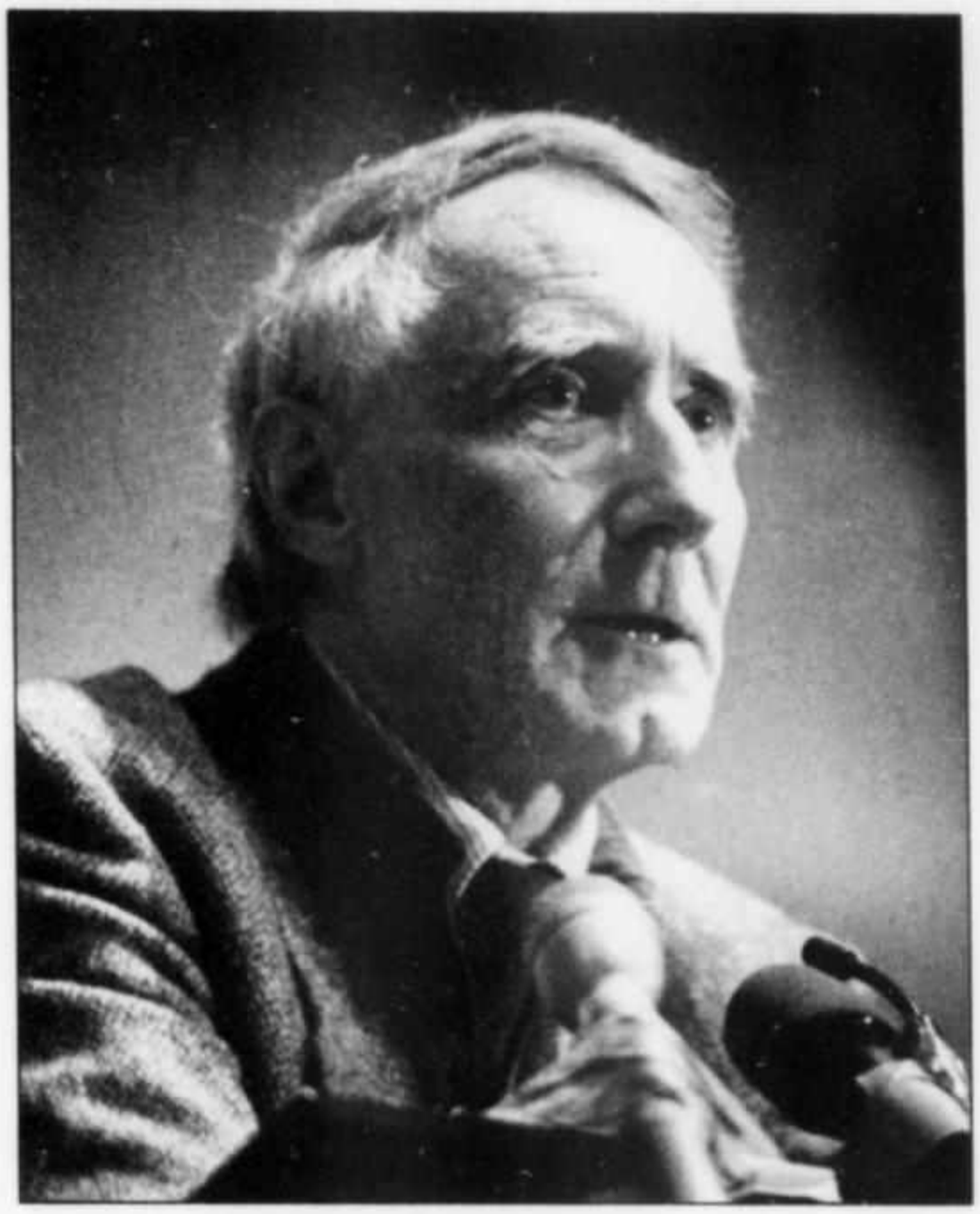
Tikkun: But certainly people inside the government must have recognized this dramatic shift in direction?

Scott: Yes. There was a whole generation of people who suppressed this knowledge, for others as well as themselves. For example, many of the Kennedy advisors who stayed on in the Johnson administration had all kinds of personal reasons for not wanting to acknowledge the difference in direction between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Tikkun: Because doing so would undermine their careers?

Scott: Because it would undermine their self-respect as well as their status. Many of these people were being attacked by those who had left the Johnson administration, and they felt a need to defend their decision to stay there. Many believed that Johnson's Great Society was a fulfillment of Kennedy's liberalism, so they had reason to want to minimize—even to themselves—the foreign-policy consequence of the shift from Kennedy to Johnson.

And then NSAM 273, by reasserting the earlier Kennedy objective of bringing troops home, was able to confuse people about the real change that had occurred. The newspapers bought into the notion that there had been no shift, and they've been saying the same thing ever since. On November 21, one day before the assassination, the *New York Times* reported on the announcement made at a high-level Honolulu Conference the day before that there would be a withdrawal of troops. On November 25, three days after the assassination, the *Times* said that the objective of withdrawal remained the same as publicly announced on October 3. Only an insider who actually knew the content of the relevant NSAMs would know that we had retreated from the October 11 implementation of plans for withdrawal back to the earlier statement of "objectives." The histories of the Vietnam War have been silent on this point; even major books such as *Kennedy in Vietnam* by



Peter Dale Scott addressing a Tikkun *forum on* JFK.

William Rust have systematically ignored the fact that shortly before his assassination, the president had implemented a plan for withdrawal.

Tikkun: If Kennedy wanted to get out of Vietnam, and he knew he would have to fight against those in the Department of Defense who did not want to get out, how could he have come up with a plan unless he had other people backing him?

Scott: He did have a few supporters in the administration. He was working chiefly with the State Department and its director of intelligence and research, Roger Hilsman. In 1964 John McNaughton, working under McNamara in the Pentagon, told witnesses that McNamara said Kennedy intended to pull out by 1965. This can't be reduced to some public-relations statement aimed at placating the doves in Congress like Senator Wayne Morse. Kennedy had given McNamara instructions to plan and then implement the whole withdrawal.

The problem for Kennedy was that there were deep divisions within his administration and he did not always know who was loyal to his own perspective. Kennedy thought that McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor were loyalists, but Taylor, it turned out, really wanted to bomb North Vietnam. Kennedy had a very recalcitrant Joint Chiefs

over which he tried to impose civilian bureaucratic control, through both McNamara and the office of International Security Affairs, which McNaughton headed. There was a great deal of plotting by the military not only against Kennedy but against the whole attempt to enforce civilian control. So the Pentagon was not a reliable source of information for Kennedy. For example, the military kept telling Kennedy that the war was going well, but it had a second set of intelligence reports that were telling the truth about Vietnam—that the war was going terribly. They kept this from both Kennedy and McNamara. The only senior person who was told what was really going on was Vice President Johnson—so Johnson was party to information being withheld conspiratorially from the president.

Tikkun: Was Johnson aware that Kennedy did not know how badly the war was going?

Scott: I don't know. After a while Kennedy knew much of the truth from Hilsman and others. But Kennedy and Johnson certainly knew that they represented opposite positions on Vietnam.

Tikkun: What could the motive have been for somebody like McNamara or Hilsman or anyone else who shared Kennedy's objective to end the war not to say that there had been a dramatic change? Either they really didn't want the war to end, or they didn't read the NSAMs the way you are proposing they should be read. If they wanted to end the war, why did they go from serving a president who supported withdrawal to a president who supported massive escalation?

Scott: First of all, I don't think Johnson envisioned either a massive escalation or ground troops at this stage, but rather a gradual escalation toward U.S. bombing.

Some people argue that Johnson adjusted to the deteriorating military situation only after Kennedy died, and that Kennedy would have adjusted to it too if he had lived. I do not claim to know what Kennedy would have done; I am only talking about what he had done by October 1963.

The change that took place in December was not really a change on the battlefield, or even a change in the perception of the war, so much as a change in the rhetoric used to describe it. The military had known since 1961 that the war was going badly, but the rules of the game were that as long as Kennedy was president they had to pretend that it was going well in order to keep the president and Congress on board. When Johnson became president, the rules of the rhetorical game changed. It was now quite appropriate to say that the war was going badly because at that stage, the Pentagon was trying to justify escalating the conflict.

Even Kennedy, by October 1963, knew things were not going so well, but he was in effect telling the military, "OK, you say it is going well, so in that case we're going to start withdrawing the troops." But that didn't mean that he actually thought the war was going well.

Tikkun: So then how did Kennedy know he was being lied to?

Scott: He was getting this information from the Intelligence and Research division of the State Department, where Roger Hilsman worked. That is why it is important to note that in January of this year Roger Hilsman stated publicly in a letter to the *New York Times* that Kennedy was in fact planning to withdraw from Vietnam.

Tikkun: The effect of the assassination, then, was to change the Vietnam policy.

Scott: And also policy in Latin America. There had been three military coups in Latin America in 1963—in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras—but Kennedy had refused to recognize the new governments. Thomas Mann, the ambassador to Mexico who had been deeply involved in the Guatemalan coup, was so upset with Kennedy's Latin American policy that he announced he was going to retire by the end of 1963. Once Kennedy was murdered, Mann became the new assistant secretary of state for Latin America; the U.S. recognized these three military coups and went on to help engineer a much more significant and larger military coup in Brazil in March 1964. (U.S. warships stationed just offshore were prepared to intervene if things went badly, and acted as an encouragement to the Brazilian military to overthrow the government.) But of course, the fact that U.S. policy toward Latin America changed as a consequence of the assassination doesn't mean that it was necessarily the motive, and certainly not the only motive.

Tikkun: If someone like Hilsman knew that U.S. policy toward Vietnam changed as a result of the assassination, and he opposed the war enough not to want to be part of the new administration, then why didn't he say what he knew at the time? Why did he wait so long? If he opposed the war, why didn't he use this fact as part of his opposition to the war by saying publicly that Kennedy was planning to end it?

Scott: Perhaps because he was not willing to take major personal risks to oppose the war. I suppose he thought

he could be useful to a future administration—and so he observed the rules of the game instead of washing dirty linen in public.

McNamara, on the other hand, stayed in the Johnson administration. Perhaps he hoped for the implementation of the Great Society. Meanwhile, no one inside the administration thought that Vietnam would become the monster it became. There was a certain "can-do" mentality that pervaded the Pentagon—and to be a good team player you had to share the belief that the United States could do anything. Certainly it could win against peasants, and there were a lot of people with their new notions of special antiguerilla warfare who had a vested interest in proving that the U.S. could do anything and win anywhere. The Kennedy brothers themselves had some of that can-do enthusiasm in 1961. By 1963, even Bobby Kennedy, who had been invested in the idea of counterinsurgency, was raising the question inside the administration, Can we win? And if not, isn't now the time to get out?

Tikkun: Why didn't Bobby Kennedy say something when U.S. policy changed?

Scott: It was a very big move when Bobby Kennedy began to oppose the war publicly, even in 1967. Once you've started a war, there is strong bureaucratic pressure to stick with it. To the Left in the 1960s, it seemed obvious that if you were in a bad war, you would oppose it. But that is not obvious to bureaucrats. Daniel Ellsberg is virtually the only insider who publicly opposed the war. There were many players who said one thing privately, or who opposed U.S. ground troops, but none of them ever said that in public. What Bobby Kennedy did was much more than what others around him were doing.

Tikkun: Still, once Bobby Kennedy had gone out on a limb to oppose the war, why didn't he use the fact that his brother had been opposed to it too? It seems very strange that if there was a serious change in policy following Kennedy's death, no one said this publicly. Were opponents of the war afraid that they themselves would be hurt?

Scott: No. I think the first reason was their desire to protect the damaged fabric of national confidence. A lot of people joined in a massive cover-up of the policy change because of the enormity of the assassination and the consequent feeling that it was important to have Americans believe in our national institutions, particularly the presidency. They wanted to create the illusion of continuity so that the politics of the country would not be disrupted, and to do that they had to insist on the continuity of policy in Vietnam. This was, I believe, an irrational thing to have done, because it promoted more distrust in the long run and more doubts about the legitimacy of the institutions whose credibility it was designed to enhance. But I understand why people made that choice in the short run.

Organized crime is tolerated because it works in collaboration with the government. If you actually live in New York or Chicago and read the newspapers, you know this. But if you are a political scientist, for some reason you don't.

Second, Bobby Kennedy had something on Johnson, so why not use it? But it is extremely likely that Johnson also had stuff on Bobby Kennedy. For example, there were a lot of very seamy aspects to Marilyn Monroe's death that involved *both* John F. Kennedy's affair with her and the possibility that Bobby Kennedy was probably with her the night she died. The FBI was following this. A story of Monroe committing suicide in anguish over having been rebuffed by the president of the United States might well have created a major scandal; that might account for why Bobby Kennedy went to try to calm her down that night. Anthony Summers's book *Goddess* shows that there were phone calls to the White House around the time of her death and that someone came in and seized records of these calls and interrupted the local investigation. This is just a trivial example of the sort of thing that Johnson and the FBI had on Bobby Kennedy.

Incidentally, some people have claimed that Bobby Kennedy said privately in 1968 that if he were elected president he would reopen the assassination investigation. But to question the lone assassin theory was much more dangerous in 1963—and dangerous in a way that would have made many liberals very wary of pursuing it further.

The brilliance of the assassination plot was that the conspirators had forged trails to induce a cover-up. There were, for example, trails that potentially linked Oswald to Fidel Castro or to the KGB and Khrushchev—a trail that might lead to war. Moreover, there was false evidence given to the Secret Service that led to a

group of anti-Castro Cubans in Chicago whose operations had been authorized indirectly by Bobby Kennedy himself.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States promised Khrushchev not only that it would not invade Cuba, but also that it would end covert operations that were being mounted by Cubans against Castro directly from the United States. Some of these Cubans were then organized into Operation Second Naval Guerilla, to conduct operations against Castro from outside the U.S. This was called Track One. But there were others still inside the U.S. who were involved in blowing up Soviet ships in order to sabotage the Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding. Bobby Kennedy wanted to honor the commitment to Khrushchev by getting as many as possible of those potentially unruly Cubans who might be involved in such activity to leave the U.S. and conduct their operations under a Track Two. He had indirectly authorized a Cuban named Paulino Sierra Martinez to gather these Cubans and get them out of the U.S., where they could go on doing whatever they wanted against Castro—including killing him (and with U.S. money). Bobby Kennedy was willing to get them money, bribes, whatever it took to get them out of the U.S. After the assassination, a false trail was laid leading the Secret Service investigation to Sierra; this might have opened up a whole area of national security that no one, including Bobby Kennedy, wanted to expose. So at a certain point the FBI ordered the Secret Service to terminate this particular investigation, which in any case had received a lot of false information.

This is just one of several trails that might have led in directions that no one wanted to investigate. This is part of why I don't think the killing was done by the mob alone, as some assassination buffs have tried to argue. It is relatively easy to kill the president. What is very difficult to guarantee is the kind of massive consensual cover-up that happened after Kennedy was killed. The key to that cover-up was the perception many people shared with those in power that the truth might very well violate international order, risk war against Cuba or even war against the Soviet Union, and also risk the exposure of a whole range of national security secrets including this Track One and Track Two arrangement that Bobby Kennedy had authorized. This arrangement took greater access to government files than the Mafia possessed.

Tikkun: Your argument seems to amount to the following: There was a motive for killing the president, and there was a cover-up afterward. But this does not establish that there was a conspiracy to kill the president. Do you know who actually killed the president?

Scott: On the basis of what I know, I am not in a position to identify who killed the president. What I can say is that my research identifies a whole set of distinct groups and sometimes even competing groups who were all pushing for an escalation of the war in Vietnam and against Cuba, and also a set of groups who were responsible for the conspiratorial cover-up of the assassination—and there is an overlap between the sets of groups. This suggests a line for further research, but it does not amount to evidentiary proof of who killed Kennedy or why.

I *can* prove that there were many arrangements and conspiracies to cover up who killed Kennedy. Some of these were almost certainly benign, such as the motives of Earl Warren, who, when he accepted the position as chair of the investigating commission, spoke of the need to avoid World War III. But there were also people who conspired before the assassination to link Lee Harvey Oswald to the KGB. These people knew well enough how the CIA and FBI worked to be able to plant things in CIA and FBI files that would make these agencies afraid that their own people would be implicated, should the investigation proceed in certain directions.

I believe there was an alliance of people inside and outside the government involved in the conspiracy, and I'll go even further than Oliver Stone and say that I believe that one of the elements in this conspiracy included Lyndon Johnson's financial backers—particularly those who had a stake in the military-industrial complex. At least one of these people presciently bought a lot of stock in his own aerospace firm prior to the assassination, which to me is a clue that he knew that the assassination was coming. I think there was an intelligence-Mafia connection that included members of the intelligence community who were involved with military-industrial corporate backers of Lyndon Johnson, who in turn were involved with Mafia people. At a minimum, you have to consider this triad of forces.

Tikkun: I want to reemphasize, however, that establishing a conspiracy to cover up does *not* establish a conspiracy to assassinate. This is particularly true if, as you say, the agencies had an independent reason to cover up—namely that someone had planted material in their files that seemed to link them to the assassination, even though they knew they were not involved.

Scott: Yes, that is true. But we have a stronger prima facie case against those who planted the evidence before the assassination. I cannot believe it is just coincidental that there is so much sensitive stuff about Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby that was certain to be found. I believe that there was a conspiracy to plant information

implicating Oswald and that it was planted by people who knew that the assassination was going to happen and that Oswald was going to be set up to take responsibility. Now, I recognize that in the case of killing a president, there are many people who will conspire to make the new government look continuous with the old one for entirely innocent reasons, particularly the need to maintain the appearance of law and order.

But the cover-up is also rooted in a repression of our awareness of the deep politics of American society. There is a set of political realities concerned with who is governing that we typically try to keep out of our consciousness, even though these realities are continually asserting themselves. For example, there are major American cities like New York, Chicago, and Dallas where elements of organized crime play an important role in the city administration. This has been true in some cities for many decades. The FBI understands this, and has used organized crime to gain information and even to enforce order. Organized crime is tolerated because it works in collaboration with government. If you actually live in New York or Chicago and read the newspapers, you know this. But if you are a political scientist, for some reason you don't.

Similarly, most people know that money has a large role in determining the outcome of elections. That's what frequently determines who becomes the leading candidate for the nomination, which candidates are taken seriously by the media, and whose messages get communicated to the electorate. This is part of what I call "deep politics"—arrangements everybody knows about, but few acknowledge. To do so forces us to say that we don't really live in a democracy but a plutocracy.

The deep politics must be acknowledged in order to unravel the facts of the Kennedy assassination—but that requires getting into areas that our society has repressed for a long time. It's hard to believe this now, but this system repressed the fact that the CIA worked together with the Mafia on attempts to kill Castro; and that the Mafia was involved because Castro appears to have reneged on what the Mafia believed was an agreement to split profits from Cuban casinos with them. Instead, Castro in effect ousted the Mafia from the casinos. Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby were both deeply interested in Cuba—Oswald tried to go there, and Ruby actually went there in 1959 (when he was an FBI informant), under circumstances that suggest that he may have been part of a massive operation to get casino cash out of Cuba and back to the U.S.

The assassination cover-up was effective precisely because it could rely on the fact that various agencies and powerful people would participate in keeping any



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The Marrano of Reason and *The Adventures of Immanence* present Baruch Spinoza as the most outstanding and influential thinker of modernity—and examine the issue of whether he was the "first secular Jew." Yirmiyahu Yovel locates the origins of Spinoza's "philosophy of immanence" in the culture of the Marranos—Jews in Spain and Portugal who had been forcibly converted to Christianity.

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knowledge of the deep politics out of public consciousness. Particularly given the coordination between the CIA and the Mafia on attempts to kill Castro, an investigation might have exposed not only these actions but might have also exposed a larger set of dirty tricks that had been going on for a long time.

The more you study the deep politics, the more you see the continuous involvement of some of the same players in other events. I got interested in Watergate because one of the Watergate burglars was Frank Sturgis, whom I had already written about in my manuscript *The Dallas Conspiracy.* I claimed that Sturgis had been publicly ordered by the Kennedy administration to stop his incriminating anti-Castro activities in 1963 and had collaborated in false stories about Oswald. Nixon's top aide, H.R. Haldeman, later said in his book about Watergate, *The Ends of Power,* that when Nixon referred in June 1974 to "the Bay of Pigs thing" on the smoking gun transcript of the Watergate tapes, "he was actually referring to the Kennedy assassination." In response the CIA ordered the FBI to stop investigating Watergate for a while, although everyone at the time was saying that the CIA was squeaky clean and that the Watergate event was strictly something to do with Nixon, his gang, his plumbers, and his attorney general. But Nixon told Haldeman to tell Richard Helms, the head of the CIA, to call off the investigation because it would uncover "the Bay of Pigs thing." What was *not* known in "the Bay of Pigs thing" was the CIA-Mafia plotting to murder Castro, and the link to the Kennedy assassination, including Frank Sturgis, one self-proclaimed plotter against Castro, who was involved in the Kennedy cover-up. It seems that Nixon was trying to signal that the government could not investigate Watergate too far because they'd get back into the Kennedy assassination. If all these things were investigated, people would end up not believing in their institutions at all, and that would create a crisis that could be exploited, either by the Left or just as possibly by the Right.

Tikkun: Your argument so far still stands strongest on the assertion of a cover-up, but not as strong on who actually killed Kennedy. Can you speculate here on that?

Scott: In my research, the most suggestive clues have emerged from a relatively restricted circle within what I call the dark quadrant of suppressed relationships or deep politics: a circle within the tripartite world of first, CIA, defense, and other intelligence networks; second, the underworld of organized crime and anti-Castro Cubans; and third, corporate interests with links both to the intelligence and defense communities and also to organized crime. The key is that all those in this dark quadrant would have resisted its exposure whether or not they were key plotters.

This dark quadrant was precisely the area the Warren Commission was so ill-equipped to look at. It failed to look properly at CIA and FBI misfunctions, not only because ex-CIA director Allen Dulles was its most active member, but because it had to rely on the CIA and FBI as its investigative resources. Worse, more than one of its assistant counsels were lawyers who continued to represent this tripartite world.

For example, the Kennedy administration had begun to investigate two scandals in 1963 that might have led to supplanting Lyndon Johnson as a vice-presidential candidate in 1964. The first was the scandal developing around the TFX fighter plane. The contract for the TFX (then called the largest contract in the history of a government) was given to General Dynamics in Fort Worth because of the corrupt Texan military-industrial lobbyists. The second scandal involved Bobby Baker, who had been a key aide to Johnson, and the systematic corruption of congressmen and others—supplying them with money and women. These scandals were converging, and they threatened to ruin Johnson's career. On November 20, two days before the Kennedy assassination, the chairman of the Senate Investigating Committee, Senator John L. McClellan, said that the committee would meet back in the same room one week later; but instead of meeting one week later, it did not meet again for as long as Lyndon Johnson was president.

In fact one of the first people Oswald contacted when he returned to the Dallas–Fort Worth area in 1962 was someone associated with industrial security for General Dynamics. Under the circumstances, it was virtually a conflict of interest for Albert Jenner—lawyer for both General Dynamics and its largest shareholder (the mob-linked Henry Crown)—to have served as he did as assistant counsel to the Warren Commission.

Tikkun: Well, lots of people had motives. I can imagine that there were also people who had motives to kill Nixon, Carter, or Reagan as well.

Scott: Yes, I believe that there were many disparate motives for killing the president.

Tikkun: It seems hard to believe that there was a gathering of people who sat down together and conspired, and that at such a meeting there were leaders of the CIA, the Pentagon, organized crime, and corporations, sitting together in a room and saying, "Let's kill the president."

Scott: I don't claim that there was such a meeting, least of all one of CIA or Pentagon *leaders.* I do see a smaller,

middle-level conspiracy, including people inside and outside the government who were able to induce a cover-up not so much with their own power and leadership, but because of their knowledge of how the system would behave. Important to this was a perception the plotters shared with colleagues not that they were overthrowing the existing political order, but rather that the Kennedy brothers were disrupting existing political arrangements—most of them unacknowledged or "deep"—to a degree that had become intolerable.

Tikkun: Imagine that a group of people from the military-industrial complex, including business, the CIA, the Mafia, and the Pentagon all said in the course of a conversation how much they wished Kennedy were dead and Johnson were president. If someone at that meeting said that people in Fort Worth would sure be happy if that happened, that people who depend on military jobs would be happy—even if someone had said that they sure wished someone would make it happen—all this would still not add up to a conspiracy to kill the president. Even if someone at that meeting had then said to specific assassins, "I think all aspects of the government and the business community and the Pentagon are behind this, and I can tell you that they said so at a meeting I attended, so now go kill him," this would still not be a conspiracy to kill the president, because the participants in that meeting would not have planned or authorized any overt acts and would not be legally responsible for anyone who left the meeting and turned this talk into action. So you have to be thinking that something *more* than this happened. That is the part that is difficult to believe.

Scott: I think there had to have been conspiratorial planning. Part of this would have involved preparing for the identification of Lee Harvey Oswald as the assassin. This involved controlling his behavior in New Orleans in August 1963, and later in Dallas. We now know quite a lot about the FBI-linked address in New Orleans, 544 Camp Street, that Oswald stamped on his pro-Castro literature; and we can reasonably argue that he was an informant acting for a private investigator (Guy Banister of 544 Camp Street), who in turn reported to the FBI on pro-Castro activities. Virtually all of Oswald's conflicting provocative and political activities in 1963—attempting to infiltrate a secret anti-Castro training camp, ordering guns by mail from gun shops that were under federal investigation, approaching Cubans in Dallas who were involved in gun-running—are most logically explained by this hypothesis: Oswald was an informant being directed in connection with government-sponsored investigations. (Two witnesses later testified under oath that Oswald used the phrase "casa nostra" in August 1963, at a time when "cosa nostra" and "causa nostra" were being used in FBI memos, but not yet by the general public—Joe Valachi would not go public with it until a Senate hearing one month later. The fact that the mob had indeed backed the anti-Castro activity Oswald was asking about, although known by the FBI, did not become common knowledge until years later. So Oswald could hardly have acted as a "loner.")

Meanwhile, and probably unknown to Oswald, the documented trail of his activities appears to have been coordinated to prepare him for a role as the patsy in a high-level assassination plot, whose documented status as an informant for government agencies would help ensure that the truth would be covered up. Only those who controlled Oswald's movements could have arranged for that.

This planning also involved knowing the parade route, or even shaping it, so that it would be within shooting distance of Lee Harvey Oswald's workplace. It involved salting the secret government files on Oswald, before as well as after the assassination, with false but plausible evidence linking Oswald to both Cuban and Soviet intelligence. We know quite a lot about this; and we can say categorically that the activities of the CIA station in Mexico, including both Chief of Station Win Scott and its officer David Phillips, should be looked at much more closely, even though both men are now dead. It may turn out that their apparently conspiratorial behavior was in response to provocations by unidentified third parties manipulating them; but to learn this would bring us closer to those who coordinated the crime.

Another area to look at is the apparently conspiratorial manipulation of Marina Oswald's testimony right after the assassination, while she was still being hidden from the FBI. We know that one of her alleged translators was actually coaching and correcting what she said in Russian. Identically corrected language came from another translator, who had for some reason been selected for the job by the head of Army Intelligence Reserve in Dallas. He was a Dallas oil man who had business links to such men as the owner of the Texas School Book Depository (and through him to the man who bought stock in his own aerospace corporation). One veteran member of Army Intelligence Reserve apparently helped plan the parade route, and was present with another member at the scene of the shooting on November 22. For some reason, Army Intelligence files in Texas also held false and inflammatory information about Oswald and Cuba obtained from the Dallas police, some of whom were members of Army Intelligence Reserve. Army Intelligence never gave these files to the Warren Commission, even when ordered to do so, and later destroyed them.

Army Intelligence was censured for this by the House Committee on Assassinations. There is much more that could still be learned in this area, such as the name of the Army Intelligence officer who spent the morning of November 22 with James Hosty, the FBI agent whose name was in Oswald's notebook. Under instructions from the Bureau, Hosty later destroyed a note from Oswald to the FBI.

Tikkun: Why have Americans been avoiding this for so long?

Scott: Because not to avoid it would require facing the deep politics of this country and facing the socially unthinkable. You cannot think these thoughts, follow the logic of these possibilities, without risking being seen as no longer a responsible person. I have a very close friend, a very decent and intelligent person, who recently told me, "I have not seen the movie *JFK* and I have no intention of doing so. I am extremely angry at it. I can see that it's playing to the crowd, which so much wants to believe in conspiracies for psychological reasons." And I said to him, "You are normally such an empirical guy and you normally draw your conclusions from the evidence. Here you are telling me that you refuse to look at the evidence. Your very accurate description of why some people believe in conspiracies can be just as easily turned against people like yourself, for whom it is extremely painful to conceive of a conspiracy, and who therefore prefer to suppress the evidence. Can't you see that the psychological explanation works equally both ways?" And he couldn't.

I'm sure that in reading this interview your readers are likely to be testing the limits of their own resistance. And since I have not attempted here to lay out the full set of facts—it would take a book and not just an interview to detail all the circumstances that prove a cover-up and strongly indicate a conspiracy to kill the president—I can imagine that it's just as hard for them as it is for anyone who has lived in this country since 1963 and who has made their own peace with the status quo to actually face the full meaning of what I'm saying. And that includes me, because I see in myself the desire to avoid really thinking about this seriously, fully confronting what is at stake, and fully facing the consequences of living in a society where there are still forces at work strenuously trying to discredit the Stone movie, just as they used to try to discredit any theory other than that of the lone assassin.

Most (perhaps all) of those engaged in this denial may have no conscious relationship to people involved in the assassination. Nevertheless, the content of what is now being denied must be addressed, and the truth established, as the best way to restore confidence in the political procedures of our partly open society. In addition to the files stored by the House Committee on Assassinations, and the more important files they have seen but not retained (such as the apparently erroneous and inflammatory CIA file on Paulino Sierra Martinez), we should be sure to obtain all relevant files from other agencies, including all of the undisclosed Vietnam policy documents for 1963. It appears more and more likely that key documents are missing, including those pertaining to the planning for U.S. escalation (unknown to Kennedy) while Kennedy was still alive. If we are to be persuaded that this gap in the record is unrelated to the deep politics of the assassination, nothing short of full disclosure and explanation will suffice. □

The Spiritual Truth of *JFK*

Peter Gabel

Oliver Stone's *JFK* is a great movie, but not because it "proves" that John F. Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy. Stone himself has acknowledged that the movie is a myth—a countermyth to the myth produced by the Warren Commission—but a myth that contains what Stone calls a spiritual truth. To understand that spiritual truth, we must look deeply into the psychological and social meaning of the assassination—its meaning for American society at the time that it occurred, and for understanding contemporary American politics and culture.

The spiritual problem that the movie speaks to is an underlying truth about life in American society—the truth that we all live in a social world characterized by feelings of alienation, isolation, and a chronic inability to connect with one another in a life-giving and powerful way. In our political and economic institutions, this alienation is lived out as a feeling of being "underneath"

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JFK meets with SNCC chair John Lewis, SCLC's Martin Luther King, Jr., Rabbi Joachim Prinz, UAW's Walter Reuther, NAACP's Roy Wilkins, and other leaders of the civil-rights movement's March on Washington less than three months before the assassination.

and at an infinite distance from an alien external world that seems to determine our lives from the outside. True democracy would require that we be actively engaged in ongoing processes of social interaction that strengthen our bonds of connectedness to one another, while at the same time allowing us to realize our need for a sense of social meaning and ethical purpose through the active remaking of the no-longer "external" world around us. But we do not yet live in such a world, and the isolation and distance from reality that envelops us is a cause of immense psychological and emotional pain, a social starvation that is in fact analogous to physical hunger and other forms of physical suffering.

One of the main psychosocial mechanisms by which this pain, this collective starvation, is denied is through the creation of an imaginary sense of community. Today this imaginary world is generated through a seemingly endless ritualized deference to the Flag, the Nation, the Family—pseudocommunal icons of public discourse projecting mere images of social connection that actually deny our real experience of isolation and distance, of living in sealed cubicles, passing each other blankly on the streets, while managing to relieve our alienation to some extent by making us feel a part of something. Political and cultural elites—presidents and ad agencies—typically generate these images of pseudocommunity, but we also play a part in creating them because, from the vantage point of our isolated positions—if we have not found some alternative community of meaning—we need them to provide what sense of social connection they can. We have discussed this phenomenon in *Tikkun* many times before, emphasizing recently, for example, the way David Duke is able to recognize and confirm the pain of white working-class people and thereby help them overcome, in an imaginary way, their sense of isolation in a public world that leaves them feeling invisible.

In the 1950s, the alienated environment that I have been describing took the form of an authoritarian, rigidly anticommunist mentality that coexisted with the fantasized image of a "perfect" America—a puffed-up and patriotic America that had won World War II and was now producing a kitchen-culture of time-saving appliances, allegedly happy families, and technically proficient organizations and "organization men" who dressed the same and looked the same as they marched in step toward the "great big beautiful tomorrow" hailed in General Electric's advertising jingle of that period. It was a decade of artificial and rigid patriotic unity, sustained in large part by an equally rigid and pathological anticommunism; for communism was the "Other" whose evil we needed to exterminate or at least contain to preserve our illusory sense of connection, meaning, and social purpose. As the sixties were later to make clear, the cultural climate of the fifties was actually a massive denial of the desire for true connection and meaning. But at the time the cultural image-world of the fifties was sternly held in place by a punitive and threatening system of authoritarian male hierarchies,

symbolized most graphically by the McCarthy hearings, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and the person of J. Edgar Hoover.

In this context, the election of John F. Kennedy and his three years in office represented what I would call an opening-up of desire. I say this irrespective of his official policies, which are repeatedly criticized by the Left for their initial hawkish character, and irrespective also of the posthumous creation of the Camelot myth, which does exaggerate the magic of that period. The opening-up that I am referring to is a feeling that Kennedy was able to evoke—a feeling of humor, romance, idealism, and youthful energy, and a sense of hope that touched virtually every American alive during that time. It was this feeling—"the rise of a new generation of Americans"—that more than any ideology threatened the system of cultural and erotic control that dominated the fifties and that still dominated the governmental elites of the early sixties—the FBI, the CIA, even elements of Kennedy's own cabinet and staff. Kennedy's evocative power spoke to people's longing for some transcendent community and in so doing, it allowed people to make themselves vulnerable enough to experience both hope and, indirectly, the legacy of pain and isolation that had been essentially sealed from public awareness since the end of the New Deal.

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to find it odd that Oswald's guilt was immediately taken for granted, with no witnesses and no legal proceeding of any kind.

Everyone alive at the time of the assassination knows exactly where they were when Kennedy was shot because, as it is often said, his assassination "traumatized the nation." But the real trauma, if we move beyond the abstraction of "the nation," was the sudden, violent loss for millions of people of the part of themselves that had been opened up, or had begun to open up during Kennedy's presidency. As a sixteen-year-old in boarding school with no interest in politics, I wrote a long note in my diary asking God to help us through the days ahead, even though I didn't believe in God at the time. And I imagine that you, if you were alive then, no matter how cynical you may have sometimes felt since then about politics or presidents or the "real" Kennedy himself, have a similar memory preciously stored in the region of your being where your longings for a better world still reside.

In this issue, Peter Dale Scott gives an account of the objective consequences of the assassination, of the ways that the nation's anticommunist elites apparently reversed Kennedy's beginning efforts to withdraw from Vietnam and perhaps through his relationship with Khrushchev to thaw out the addiction to blind anticommunist rage—an addiction that, as he saw during the Cuban missile crisis, could well have led to a nuclear war. But for these same elites, the mass-psychological consequences of the assassination posed quite a different problem from that of reversing government policy—namely, the need to find a way to reconstitute the image of benign social connection that could reform the imaginary unity of the country on which the legitimacy of government policy depends. In order to contain the desire released by the Kennedy presidency and the sense of loss and sudden disintegration caused by the assassination, government officials had to create a process that would rapidly "prove"—to the satisfaction of people's emotions—that the assassination and loss were the result of socially innocent causes.

Here we come to the mass-psychological importance of Lee Harvey Oswald and the lone gunman theory of the assassination. As Stone's movie reminds us in a congeries of rapid-fire, post-assassination images, Oswald was instantly convicted in the media and in mass consciousness even before he was shot by Jack Ruby two days after the assassination. After an elaborate ritualized process producing twenty-six volumes of testimony, the Warren Commission sanctified Oswald's instant conviction in spite of the extreme implausibility of the magic bullet theory, the apparently contrary evidence of the Zapruder film, and other factual information such as the near impossibility of Oswald's firing even three bullets (assuming the magic bullet theory to be true) with such accuracy so quickly with a manually cocked rifle. You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist, nor do you have to believe any of the evidence marshaled together by conspiracy theorists, to find it odd that Oswald's guilt was immediately taken for granted within two days of the killing, with no witnesses and no legal proceeding of any kind—and that his guilt was later confidently affirmed by a high-level Commission whose members had to defy their own common sense in order to do so. The whole process might even seem extraordinary considering that we are talking about the assassination of an American president.

But it is not so surprising if you accept the mass-psychological perspective I am outlining here—the

perspective that Kennedy and the Kennedy years had elicited a lyricism and a desire for transcendent social connection that contradicted the long-institutionalized forces of emotional repression that preceded them. The great advantage of the lone gunman theory is that it gives a *nonsocial* account of the assassination. It takes the experience of trauma and loss and momentary social disintegration, isolates the evil source of the experience in one antisocial individual, and leaves the image of society as a whole—the "imaginary community" that I referred to earlier—untarnished and still "good." From the point of view of those in power, in other words, the lone gunman theory reinstitutes the legitimacy of existing social and political authority as a whole because it silently conveys the idea that our elected officials and the organs of government, among them the CIA and the FBI, share our innocence and continue to express our democratic will. But from a larger psychosocial point of view, the effect was to begin to close up the link between desire and politics that Kennedy had partially elicited, and at the same time to impose a new repression of our painful feelings of isolation and disconnection beneath the facade of our reconstituted but imaginary political unity.

Having said this, I do not want to be understood to be suggesting that there was a conspiracy to set up Oswald in order to achieve this mass-psychological goal. There may well have been a conspiracy to set up Oswald, but no complex theory is required to explain it. And it would be absurd, in my view, to think that the entire media consciously intended to manipulate the American people in the headlong rush to convict Oswald in the press. The point is rather that this headlong rush was something we all—or most of us—participated in because we ourselves, unconsciously, are deeply attached to the status quo, to our legitimating myths of community, and to denying our own alienation and pain. The interest we share with the mainstream media and with government and corporate elites is to maintain, through a kind of unconscious collusion, the alienated structures of power and social identity that protect us from having to risk emerging from our sealed cubicles and allowing our fragile longing for true community to become a public force.

The great achievement of Oliver Stone's movie is that it uses this traumatic, formative event of the Kennedy assassination—an event full of politically important cultural memory and feeling—to assault the mythological version of American society and to make us experience the forces of repression that shape social reality. The movie may or may not be accurate in its account of what Lyndon Johnson might have known or of the phones in Washington shutting down just before the assassination or of the New Zealand newspaper that mysteriously published Oswald's photographs before he was arrested. But the movie does give a kinetic and powerful depiction of the real historical forces present at the time of the assassination, forces that were in part released by the challenge to the fanatical anticommunism of the fifties that Kennedy to some extent brought about. Through his crosscutting images of the anti-Castro fringe, the civil-rights movement, high and low New Orleans club life, and elites in corporate and government offices who thought they ran the country, Stone uses all his cinematic and political energy to cut through the civics-class version of history and to bring the viewer into sudden contact with the realities of power and alienation that were present at that time and are present in a different form now.

I say this is the great achievement of the movie because no matter who killed Kennedy, it was the conflict between the opening-up of desire that he represented and the alienated need of the forces around him to shut this desire down that caused his death. This struggle was an important part of the meaning of the 1960s, and it provides the link, which Stone draws openly, between John Kennedy's death and the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. There is no way for the forces of good to win the struggle between desire and alienation unless people can break through the gauzy images of everything being fine except the lone nuts, a legitimating ideology that is actually supported by our denial of the pain of our isolation and our collective deference to the system of Authority that we use to keep our legitimating myths in place. Oliver Stone's *JFK* brings us face-to-face with social reality by penetrating the compensatory image-world of mass culture, politics, and journalism. And for that reason it is an important effort by someone whose consciousness was shaped by the sixties to transform and shake free the consciousness of the nineties. □

Genesis

He said it was good
and we go out
into it each morning
carrying our shields,
not against chaos—
the midnight terror—
but against all that was
created in orderly fashion
when the lesser light
and the greater light were hung.

Harvey Shapiro

The Stoning of Oliver and the Fascination of *JFK*

Todd Gitlin

No target since Saddam Hussein—not even "the Japanese"—has accumulated more concentrated crossfire from the American press corps during the George Bush years than Oliver Stone. The distinguished media critic Garry Trudeau made the point graphically in an op-ed column in the *New York Times,* depicting Stone cruising down the street under fire from "troubled columnists," a *Washington Post* writer "with known ties to organized journalism," drifters "squeezing off cheap shots," "a professional character assassin" letting loose "a high-powered discharge" and, not least, "George Will, a deranged pedant from Bethesda"—many of these snipers clustered within a few blocks of each other in midtown Manhattan at *Time, Newsweek,* and the *New York Times,* the triple overpass of received opinion.

But one of the many extraordinary upshots of the *JFK* phenomenon is that the fusillade backfired. (A serious conspiracy theorist might say Aha! finding here, on the principle of cui bono—who gains?—proof that The Media are all in it together, whence Time-Warner, Stone's distributor, must have put The Media up to the greatest prepublication publicity campaign in the twentieth century.) For the tirades spelled the name right, *JFK,* and the ever-renewable magic of the name, in a time when heroes are dead, commanded crowds. The hordes spilled out to the darkened cathedrals where Americans transact the bulk of their public meditation—the great mall-to-mall multiplex where the main current of American culture runs wide if not deep. The result is an unprecedented storm of movie talk—a succession of passions. There are people who refuse to see the movie for themselves—another kind of strong opinion. Virtually everyone I talk to has a strong opinion—even two or three, succeeding and contradicting each other. The movie goes on working on you; even its errors are somehow enlivening.

Philip Roth has said that America is full of "animated talk about second-rate movies by first-rate people," but in this case the movie under inspection is, in its distinct way—as kinetics, energy field, sheer spectacle—remarkable. It is neither subtle nor coherent but it is something else that people are not normally likely to find at the mall: public-minded, audacious, and *worth talking about.* Unrelenting in its (literally) staggering intricacy of editing, its rhapsody of splicing, the movie spins the viewer into—what? Not submission, for people come out of the darkened theater asking their own *What if*s and *But what about*s, drawing their own distinctions between what makes sense and what doesn't. What the movie accomplishes is immersion—the grainy-textured, wraparound, all-Dolby, realer-than-virtually-real experience.

And so it has become a force field, drawing that part of each of us which suspects that many or most of history's driving forces are to be found offstage. Stone, righteously insistent on holding *someone* accountable for the dreadful Vietnam War that visited his wounds and obsessions on him, yanks the universe toward him and compels *us,* even by his errors, to argue with him; to ask, "Well, if it didn't happen this way, do you have a better idea about the unsolved crime of the century? And, by the way, are you not appalled by the spectacle of the official guardians of the public good over three decades shrugging their shoulders?"

A movie is like a drug, a strong movie like a strong drug: When it mixes into the bloodstream, it takes on the coloration of set and setting—personal mind-set and social setting. The film has struck more than a chord—it seems to have struck a whole orchestra, sending the culture into an intense cacophony and vibration. To understand the impact and the fascination, we have to think about the intrinsic properties of the drug, along with the set and the setting.

The easy part is to diagnose the simplistic appeal of the particular version of truth-gathering that Oliver Stone settled on. *JFK* is, of course, *Mr. Smith Goes After the Military-Industrial Complex.* The audience, in its offended innocence, knows whose body was buried, if not by whom, and wants to know why. One of the most disturbing aspects of the Warren Commission version is that Oswald was undersupplied with motives to kill

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Kennedy. Stone, like many of the conspiracy buffs whose work he made use of, is a connoisseur of big motives. The screen pours them forth—as if it must necessarily follow that the motives of an action must be commensurate with its mythic magnitude. Big acorns do not from little oaks fall. And so we have the movie's canonization of Jim Garrison, its sloppy demonization of Clay Shaw, its neglect of the Oswald-Ruby-Cuban-mob connections, and, moreover, its frequent conversion of hypotheses into pictures that for some viewers take on the weight of thousands of words of evidence and counterhypotheses.

By one account, Stone early on told a Warner executive that the movie he wanted to make about the Kennedy assassination was *Rashomon,* Akira Kurosawa's fable about the impossibility of ever arriving at a single truth. A terrific and most un-Hollywood of ideas—a triangulation of perspectives, a movie about doubt, about what can't (not yet, or—who knows?—ever) be known. Instead, Stone decided to make a melodrama of dawning awareness—the moral triumph of Jim Garrison, his consciousness raised by often inexplicable leaps and bounds, a figure who cannot bear the weight of unimpeachability Stone lays on him. Stone organized his movie along too straight a narrative spine: the truly crackpot hypothesis that hundreds of operatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, military intelligence, the CIA, the FBI, the Dallas police, the anti-Castro Cubans, and God-knows-who-else pulled off the perfect political crime with nary a subsequent squeal, a deathbed confession, or a second thought.

But the power and achievement of the film—the power and achievement of any film—is far different from the plausibility of its plot. Raymond Chandler is said to have remarked, on seeing the film version of *The Big Sleep,* that there was one murder left unsolved. Not that it mattered. *As experience,* a movie is not an argument, a court case, or a history. It comes off as an onslaught of impressions. And so Stone argues not so much through logic and point-counterpoint, as through montage and juxtaposition. He has mastered the mobile camera and the action splice. He doesn't know that anyone murdered David Ferrie, but he cuts to the hands forcing the tablets down Ferrie's throat—thereby incurring the criticism that he has dramatized the strictly hypothetical, in grainy black-and-white, claiming in the process that it happened, in fact, in living color. But there is another way to interpret scenes like this, including the scandalous intersplicing of actual Zapruder coverage with remade footage. Consider that Stone might be proposing: If this scene can be imagined, couldn't it, or something like it, have happened? In fact, the whole film—like virtually any docudrama—can be read not as necessarily maintaining that *This happened,* but rather, *Consider that things might have happened this way, and what do you make of the odd chance that they did?*

Stone's talent is precisely to manipulate—to lay hands on your synapses and tear them apart. Often his main instrument of argument is the splice. But this doesn't make him dismissible or totalitarian, and it doesn't mean that you have to take the movie as all of a piece. Who knows how many spectators take it that way? By the film's end, he and Kevin Costner have scarcely persuaded me that Jim Garrison is the patron saint of scrupulous investigation. Or that the Donald Sutherland character, X, apparently based on Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty, was the only man standing in the way of the megaconspiracy; or that the Vietnam War was the stake; or that from the moment X was dispatched to the South Pole, Kennedy was, as they say, *history.* Indeed, when I ask friends who approve of the film whether they believe X's scenario, most say, Not at all. They are capable of discerning, of seeing through the splices, of noting the judge's skeptical looks during Costner/Garrison's (fictional) barrage of a soliloquy of a summation. They say, Stone plays fast and loose, he ought to have played slower and tighter. Fine. Stone also has his Garrison say, "I don't have much of a case." His real point, like X's, is to "stir the shitstorm." By applying all his percussive technique and artful cutting, he succeeds where it counts: in shaking one's faith that the world is organized as the Warren Commission—or the *New York Times*—says it is organized.

Or is that too easy in an America that believes in planetary influences, flying saucers, all manner of plots masterminded by God and the Devil and The Media?

The fear that *JFK* plays on and promotes is a rich, often fertile, sometimes energizing, sometimes paralyzing fear in political life—the fear that small groups are making history behind the backs of everyone else. In principle, this kind of fear has its reasons. Fact: Small groups in Washington promoted the war in Vietnam. There *were* secret decisions. True, they took place in an ideological setting that prompted the decision makers to misread drastically the actual place Vietnam, and to construct a cold-war stage set, "Vietnam." But small groups—"conspiracies," if you like—made decisions, ordered attacks, sent troops, lied and lied. Stone's sainted JFK tried and tried again, in camera, to kill Castro. Fact: Conspiracies are routine. What is a conspiracy if not a group working closely together in some kind of more-or-less explicit agreement that the parties undertake to keep secret? The very word can be traced back to physical proximity: From *com,* with, and *spirare,* to

breathe. Conspiracies happen when groups collaborate out of sight. Washington works this way. People who know each other work up strategies, make plans, acquire personnel, make things happen. Consequences unfold—often enough, not the ones intended. And then history zigs when you might have expected it to zag.

Aha! is no substitute for a living transformation of our political climate.

There is, in short, nothing controversial about the existence of conspiracies. The question the movie raises is: Could Kennedy have been killed by one? And for all but semiprofessional assassination obsessives—for many of them too—the answer has to be, *I don't know.* And that honest answer is itself chilling. The nerve it scrapes is a live nerve. Almost thirty years after a person or persons unknown murdered the president of the United States (one of those persons very possibly being the intelligence agent Oswald, swimming in one or another or twenty different political histories), *we don't know who or why.*

The film offers another dangerous satisfaction. To be alive and even half-conscious in the America of 1992 is to know that the world is sour. Arguably it went far worse after November 22, 1963 than it might have been possible to expect before that awful date. Not because Kennedy deserved to be promoted into Camelot. Indeed, Stone has shined Kennedy's armor beyond all historical recognition in order to preserve the movie's Good Guy–Bad Guy melodrama. If Kennedy was indeed, in the fall of 1963, inclined to phase out the Vietnam War—and I remain, at this moment, for the sake of argument, agnostic—it was only after he had pumped up the cold war by inventing a missile gap, boosting the Pentagon's fortunes, priming the Green Berets, and licking his lips over the grey game of counter-insurgency. Kennedy's bright and shining hour, the Camelot invented postmortem by Jacqueline Kennedy and Theodore H. White, is a fiction. But the political world today seems to lack any shine at all. An upbeat scenario is hard to come by. The end of the cold war has produced a resounding anticlimax—even for those who rejoice, following Commander-in-Chief George Herbert Walker Bush, that America won. Even the Gulf War victory has the taste of ashes in the mouths of its partisans.

One reason, then, the movie gets itself talked about is that it follows the white-hatted Garrison down his obsessive track, screaming that in the welter of avoidable human suffering, *somebody has to be held responsible.* Where there are crimes, there are not only bad ideas, there are criminals. The war was a crime and no one has ever been held accountable. True, the movie's indictment is unconvincing. It cuts to the chase when it needs the mess of history, the false starts of real investigations. It needs more friction, more ambiguity, more maddening uncertainty. But in all its excess, it has the distinct virtue of taking history seriously as something that some do to others. It affirms that there is a national fate. In this, it seems dangerously old-fashioned to a postmodern eye.

So several cheers to Oliver Stone for stoking a public interest in how the history of our time was made—an interest not only in grassy knolls and tramps, in Oswald's handlers, in the capacity of Mannlicher-Carcano rifles, in all the minutiae, but in how the machinery of evil might work. How we would love to see one of the great crimes understood, let alone punished! Love Kennedy or leave him, the assassination in Dealey Plaza was momentous. It is hard for a patriot or a rationalist to bear not knowing who killed the not-so-romantic Kennedy, and a lot of dreams along with him—dreams that, whoever the actual Kennedy was, the public good might be found and fought for, and, not least, that *the world might make sense.*

Instead, in 1992, the world looks opaque. The Vietnam War is reduced to a mythic failure that Bush aimed to rescind with an equally mythic, televisual equivalent for war. In the popular understanding, the Vietnam War is "Vietnam," and the real Vietnam, with its millions of maimed, is no more real to many Americans than it was before American soldiers parachuted in to save freedom. America staggered into and out of Vietnam and learned next to nothing except—in the words of George Bush—that "it," whatever "it" was, shouldn't be done again. And no one seems to care why "it" happened.

Still we know, somewhere beneath the surface, "forces" are at work. Sheiks collect billions, weapons travel, debt-ridden companies die, savings and loans shut down, banks tremble, insurance companies go belly up, and hardly anyone is ever found accountable. Reason, as a political force, is neutered. This is an atmosphere in which all manner of diagrams are being drawn. Neo-Nazis have their diagrams too—Jewish media, interlocking directorates. The crackpots appeal to pure paranoia, the rationality of fools. Discredit them we must, but the longing for rationality won't quit.

So along comes Oliver Stone with his talents, his clues and hypotheses, his splendid actors, and his too-easy answers, and by putting his movie on the national screen he exhibits the fact that the military-industrial complex is not, indeed, all-powerful. (Or are we supposed

to believe that this Time-Warner operation is a decoy, part of the plot?) More power to those devotees who will proceed to pore through the about-to-be-opened files thanks to Stone. Others are far more knowledgeable than I about the particulars of the Warren Commission and the House Special Committee on Assassinations, and will sift now, perhaps, with new intensity through the work of thoughtful investigators. I am neither a close student of exit-woundology nor a grassy-knollist, and I don't know how many Oswalds there were or are, or what became of anyone's missing brain, Kennedy's or Reagan's, nor am I adept at the literature of the tramps or the Mexico City trip. There are close students of the assassination, of the magic bullet theory, the switched corpse theory, the mob hit theory, whom I respect, and who disagree among themselves about these matters. But one may be skeptical that much of value is to be found unshredded and undoctored in CIA files about the career of Lee Harvey Oswald, say, or FBI files about Jack Ruby. Those who think "The Government," a seamless entity, is capable of killing the president and keeping the secret for three decades surely cannot doubt that this same Government has been capable of shredding some files and concocting others. In the end, it seems almost certain that the murder will remain unsolved. This is intolerable—dramatically unsatisfying—and we are going to have to tolerate it.

And this is where we can see what the satisfaction of mapping Big Plots *fails* to do for the common republican good. The pleasure of conspiracy theories is also their danger. They assure us that everything we see is—by definition—stage-managed. The world of appearances is a sham. Behind the curtain, the Wizard (in the guise of the Trilateral Commission or the Secret Team) is pushing pawns. In this wacky game, anyone who thinks himself a bishop only proves himself a pawn: an appealing idea for rationalists who want to believe that history is both intelligible and strange, and indeed for humanists who believe that individuals—not abstract "classes" or ill-defined "elites"—make history. The conspiracy theorist in each of us relishes the down-and-dirty, the who-said-what-to-whom, the fear and/or the thrill that the line between the paranoid and the realist is precious thin. Conspiracy theorists don't want to hear about the impenetrability or the inversions of history, let alone about accidents or miscalculations. They want names named. They know that history is capable of being driven, managed, pushed. They say: If you doubt that history can be engineered, what you call your commonsense skepticism is the nub of your blindness. You deny one of the deepest forces at work in your psyche, namely, your paranoia.

And there is the stand-off, if we are debating what actually happened. Conspiracy theorists are not so impressed by the other part of the truth—that conspiracies make history, as Marx would have said, *but not in conditions of their own making*. Moreover, if we are to be logical, then X's question, "Who benefited?" is like an express train—once on the track, it's hard to stop. Must every consequential action in history be attributed to its beneficiaries? Was Hitler a creature of Zionists? Stalin a creature of Roosevelt? Did Nixon arrange the assassination of Kennedy, knowing that Johnson would escalate the Vietnam War and thereby leave the country ripe for Nixon's return in 1968? Did the Kennedy camp—Larry O'Brien, for example—strike back by suckering the plumbers into the Watergate? This way lies the hall of mirrors. To ask consistently, Cui bono? is to commit oneself to an absolute mania of imponderables. And yet to ask Cui bono? inconsistently is to abandon the bright idea of the absolute knowability of history. We are back to square zero. We have no principle to guide a search. The answer to the question Cui bono? is not an explanation about how history happens.

Paranoia aside, then, the desire to know the truth of momentous events becomes us as a culture. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that the names were named, the motive unraveled, the grand jury convened, the trial held. Where would we be then, possessed of the truth? Would the Left's feebleness in the last two decades be overcome? I suspect not, any more than the Left was unleashed by Watergate or Iran-Contra, or would be resurrected by proof that the Reagan campaign made a deal with Iran in 1980. Aha! is no substitute for a living transformation of our political climate. To refute the magic bullet theory would not be to develop a theory of political magic. To the despair of historians and conspiracy theorists alike, it is sentimental to think that even the truth, after all this time, will make us free. The murderers did their work and we find ourselves living right now, in the aftermath, where we always live.

And still (one more turn of the screw): One of the central questions facing this anesthetic culture is, Can we as a society find a way to discuss the public business? Do we expect presidential campaigns, say, to ignite our collective political reason? In this setting, *JFK* does us a service. It starts conversations that must be had. It opens files, reminds us of how many secrets the cold war threw into the deep freeze. It reminds us of the spookiness, the changeability, and yet the human scale, of history. If it triggers nostalgia for Camelot, let it also shake us into doubting official stories—including Jim Garrison's *and* including those of the former Director of Central Intelligence, George Herbert Walker Bush. □

PERSONAL ESSAY

Eighteen Points in Evidence

Hildy Levin

1. What would evidence look like? The best kind: written, a diary entry from early on, the mid-sixties. One that would say: I hate when he puts his mouth there. Or more explicitly: between my legs.

Just like I saw it a week and a half ago, mid-1991, on the West Coast, in a bed in an apartment, in a flash inside my head: I saw my body as a young girl's, or somebody's girlish body, no hair between the legs, on the bed, and his face, going up and down, zooming in, like a game.

And the therapist, in mid-1991, says: And if it's not true, if you are making it up, and I'm not saying you are—and she says this because I'm afraid I'm making this up—why would you come up with this image? It's a pretty frightening image.

And when she says that, when she plays along with my doubts, my doubts turn around, on the edge of outrage: How could it not have been true?

My diaries are in boxes on shelves. My elementary school diary says things like: I went with Daddy to the pet shop to get some new fish. Mama and I went to "F.A.O. Schwartz" and got Shelly a bendy doll. Today our class went to "Atlantic Dairy Farm." I put all place names in quotation marks. Looking back, I sense a note of skepticism that probably was never there.

This is what my diary from age sixteen says: Teddy told me, I feel that I could rape you and your expression wouldn't change.

He may have been right. Though he didn't rape me. We were lying down outside in the dark (we were junior counselors at summer camp), French-kissing and I didn't like it at all. I felt smothered. I felt something hard on my thigh. In my diary, I drew diagrams showing the position of our bodies.

It's like being an archaeologist in the lost country of the self. Digging for traces. Putting parts together. My therapist's walls are covered with jigsaw puzzles.

Hildy Levin is a pseudonym. Some facts were changed for self-protection.

2. Or doctor's records. My pediatrician is retired, and now works sometimes as a cruise physician. I called the successor to his practice who said that the records must have been thrown away, but that I could check the hospital microfiche. But I wasn't ever in the hospital for anything related to sexual abuse—at least that I can remember. Or that anyone talks about. Terri, my best friend from childhood, remembers that once I fainted at a parade. I don't remember that at all. How much have I forgotten?

3. They proved the Holocaust happened in a court of law. A Nazi group offered money to anyone who could prove it and someone did. One summer I worked in the county office of child protection on cases involving sexual abuse. The reports I wrote exist somewhere, the cases have continued without me, leaving a trail, moving children to and fro.

4. I remember one spanking, and in the writing I did about it, it became sexual and sadistic. I remember him pulling the elastic on my underwear. I remember him pinching me and saying, Now I have you and I can pinch you any time and you'll feel it wherever you are. My father is the community leader, the kind man, the one my friends would tell their problems to, which was rare in a father.

5. Last spring I stopped believing anything happened when my old friend Terri told another friend: Mr. Levin was really the most perfect father in the neighborhood.

And so naturally I thought, How could he ever have done anything wrong?

6. Something is familiar about this configuration: me lying on the floor, grabbing someone's leg (my father's? my mother's?) and my father hitting at my fingers with the belt. My sister says she remembers kindness and tolerance, supposes there may have been a few deserved, unmemorable spankings.

I remember cutting out frames from comic strips of people being spanked and thinking that this was SEX.

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ROUNDTABLE

Reclaiming Values and Recovering Votes: Democratic Strategies for the Nineties

Barbara Boxer is a ten-year member of Congress from the San Francisco Bay Area currently running for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate. Geraldine Ferraro was the Democratic party candidate for vice president of the United States in 1984 and is currently a candidate for U.S. Senate in New York. Peter Gabel is president of New College of California and associate editor of Tikkun. *Elaine Kamarck is senior fellow of the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. and an election-year columnist for* Newsday *and the* Los Angeles Times. *David Kusnet is author of* Speaking American: How the Democrats Can Win in the Nineties *(Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992). Harold Meyerson is executive editor of the* Los Angeles Weekly. *Fred Siegel is a professor of history at the Cooper Union in New York and the author of a prize-winning series of essays on the 1988 elections.*

Tikkun: The current wisdom of political analysts is that the way the liberals and progressives can win in 1992 is to identify themselves with the Democratic party, and to have that party identify itself as pro-middle-class by supporting a set of pro-middle-class economic programs. But the ability of David Duke to gather 55 percent of the white vote in Louisiana suggests that the liberals and progressives would be missing the boat if they ignored a set of concerns that we at *Tikkun* call "meaning-related issues." These are issues that speak to people's hunger for a framework that provides meaning and purpose in life. It is by addressing these concerns that the Right gained power in the past two decades. What do you see as the strategy that liberals and progressives should be mounting in 1992?

Barbara Boxer: In presidential politics, what we need most is a messenger who can frame the issues in a way that can touch most of the people in the country. In California, what I'm hearing from a wide spectrum of people is a general disgust for politics. When people ask me, "What distinguishes one senator from another?" I say, "To me, it's not a question of whether they are Democrats or Republicans, or whether they are liberals or conservatives; it's really a question of whether they are dead or alive."

What people want is a shot at the American dream and the California dream. When I grew up in the fifties, there wasn't any question of what this country believed in: It gave everyone the chance to be the best. You had to work for it, but it was there in the end for you. But today there's a lot of fear that no matter how hard you work, the possibility of really succeeding may no longer be there. So we need to be able to get the money home from Europe and Japan that we've so generously given in the past forty-five years—and then we will be able to get America back on the right track. The economic issue is the overwhelming concern in 1992.

Fred Siegel: Values are entering the 1992 campaign in two ways. First, there is a renewed emphasis on the long run, on deferred gratification, participation in religious organizations, and a renewed emphasis on demanding more of our children. There is the concern, articulated by Bill Clinton and New Jersey assemblyman Wayne Bryant, among others, that rights be linked to responsibilities, so that social welfare is once again linked to middle-class values.

Second is the notion of fair play. The two key campaigns of 1991, Duke in Louisiana and Wofford in Pennsylvania, had one thing in common. They mobilized hostility both upward and downward: upward at the corporate elites who have not been accountable for their actions; and downward at those who receive social welfare benefits but who are perceived as not making their fair contribution to society.

Geraldine Ferraro: What I'm finding as I campaign for the Senate seat is that so many people are hurting that they are beginning to listen to our message. We are focusing on suffering, particularly that of the middle class. We are talking about tax relief, particularly the dramatic growth of real estate taxes. And there's a tremendous amount of middle-class fear: People are afraid that they won't be able to keep what they have now. Part of the reason there isn't much spending is that people are worried that they won't have a job in a year, so if they buy a car on a finance plan, how will they pay for it? Or if they lose their job, they won't have any health insurance. There's fear that they won't be able to afford to send their kids to college.

But we also want to link benefits to responsibilities, so we are talking less about grants and more about loans. We need to talk about health care, but in the context of the responsibilities that we all have to each other, whether of employers to employees or of those who are middle-aged both to those who are older and to those who are younger. So I agree with the theme of responsibility—but it's more than just the responsibility of

the poor that has to be addressed; we need to talk about the responsibility of middle-class people as well.

Peter Gabel: The economic issues should be put in a context of meaning—by simultaneously addressing the need to overcome people's sense of isolation, despair, and feeling disconnected from one another. A tax cut per se does not convey this. At best, it conveys a sense of relief to the isolated individual or family. At worst, it seems to promote consumerism and selfishness as the solution to social problems. In the same way, just talking about creating jobs seems to imply that all that matters is working and earning a wage rather than the meaningfulness and purpose of work. Liberals and progressives need to talk about ending the recession in terms that link their ideas on these issues to ways of constructing a society in which people feel humanly recognized, validated, and connected to one another as a community.

Political analysts are right to see health care as the key to the Wofford victory in Pennsylvania, but they are wrong to think of health care as merely another middle-class entitlement program. Health care is important to us because of our daily struggles to take care of other people who are important to us—our parents, our children, and our friends—while trying to keep our jobs and finances together. I think Wofford was successful because he evoked the image of health care as the expression of a caring and connected community, in contrast to the Republican Thornburgh's campaign, which just seemed like a naked power-grab that exploited his connections to George Bush. David Duke was able to do this, too, but by offering the image of a false community that was constituted by attacking some group of outsiders (a group he called "welfare queens").

Ferraro: But when people face bad economic times, they worry about what's going to happen to them. When Duke says, "In order for you to survive, someone else is going to have to suffer," he frames the issue in a way that speaks to real economic fears.

Gabel: The real fears, whether of not having a job, not being able to support your parents when they get old or sick, or not being able to ensure that you can send your kids to college, are really linked to a set of feelings of humiliation, alienation, and isolation. What right-wingers like Duke do is to overcome these kinds of feelings, helping to constitute a kind of pseudocommunity of meaning and purpose, by unifying people in a racist manner against some outside group. And this gives people a feeling of power and community that feels temporarily gratifying.

Harold Meyerson: Nineteen ninety-two is shaping up as a profoundly optimistic year for Democrats, in part because the Democrats are understanding the values issues articulated by Fred Siegel, and partly because this is the first post-prosperity election, the first since 1948 in which American prosperity is not the tacit given. The Democrats are addressing middle-class needs with tax programs and health-care programs that are progressive, and in the process the neoliberalism that sprang up in this country in the 1980s and advocated shunning governmental spending has essentially vanished from the scene.

One of the resonant themes that the Democrats can raise in 1992 is that the Republicans have been directing their economic growth program to the top 10 percent of the economy, but that the well-being of the nation as a whole has been ignored. Democrats are in a position to talk about economic programs that evoke a positive notion of American nationhood—and not just concern for the upper 10 percent of the population.

Boxer: We need to talk about investing in America. We can't compete if we don't have a better transportation system, an economic infrastructure, a better education system, an energy-efficient productive system, or if we don't clean up the ecological mess we've made. Now we are talking about building a strong America, and to do this, we have to create far more jobs then we've done in the past. If we give incentives to the private sector to do some of this, we can create thousands and thousands of jobs.

Elaine Kamarck: Some people in this country have been hurting since 1973—those who have high school educations or less. Their real wages have plummeted in the last two decades. The Democrats have been extraordinarily slow to recognize this. The Republicans responded with race-baiting and with claims that the Democrats had become so involved in cultural flirtations with other groups that they no longer cared about this group, and to a certain extent, these Republicans were right. The Democrats appeared to be involved in various cultural fringe issues. The Democrats lost their base: Working-class people stopped voting Democratic in the eighties, and in 1988 many of them stopped voting altogether. The way for the Democrats to regain this base cannot be to talk about job programs with their imagery of dead-end jobs that don't prepare people for the future. On the other hand, you have people like Clinton talking about apprenticeship programs that provide the kind of intense on-the-job training that makes non-college-bound youth in Germany and Japan into highly productive workers.

David Kusnet: The Democrats do need to put the middle class at the center of their argument, not just because it has the votes but because self-sufficiency is at the center of the American idea. They also need to define a community of values that includes the middle class, the working poor, and people on welfare who want to get off welfare and into the work force. Part of the challenge for the Democrats is to show how communitarian policies can also make the economy more successful. For example, empowering workers—giving them more responsibility for how they do their jobs and the quality of the products they produce or services they provide—combines values we care about, participation and empowerment, with a concern for quality. And allowing workers to take time off from work to care for sick family members can make them more productive on the job.

Ferraro: But we Democrats did push for the Family Leave Bill and a Republican president vetoed it.

Tikkun: The Republicans managed to make themselves known as the profamily force in this country, even though substantively, as you point out, Democrats have favored specific programs that benefit family life while Republicans have opposed them. Conservatives argued that the essence of liberalism was merely a concern with individual rights and individual choice, and that this privileging of the individual over social or familial obligations has had the long-term effect of undermining family values and making long-term loving commitments harder to come by. But to counter this, it's not enough for liberals and progressives to point to specific legislative pieces they've supported that are in fact profamily; they need to articulate a profamily vision that is progressive (that is, one that doesn't privilege the "traditional family" while disparaging every other kind, that doesn't retreat from a commitment to women's liberation, and that is unequivocally supportive of women leaving oppressive relationships). At the same time, liberals need to affirm the value of supportive, loving relationships as the best form of human life rather than just one of a variety of options.

Kamarck: There is real movement on this issue among many people on both the Left and the Right. From the Left, there is a renewed understanding of the importance of two-parent families, and a recognition that the single-parent family is not an "alternative lifestyle" but rather a problem that has serious impact on the future capabilities of children being raised in these kinds of families. From the Right there is growing support for some kind of "children's allowance," either in the form of a tax break or subsidy for children.



Ferraro: I think you have an unrealistic view of what families really are today. My father died when I was a kid and I grew up in a single-parent family. My family was not dysfunctional; it had a tremendous amount of love, connection, values, and responsibilities. Sure, it would be wonderful if everyone had two-parent families, but that isn't what is really happening in the world today. It's certainly better for little girls to grow up in families where they have mothers who serve as role models and little boys have fathers who serve as role models—but we have to acknowledge that families are not the same today as they were in the old-time movies and "Leave It to Beaver." I don't think we have to surrender to a single definition and be judgmental because some people don't fit into the Republican definition of family.

Siegel: This may be "reality"; but those areas where there is a high concentration of single-parent families also have an extraordinary level of social breakdown, and these are the areas from which everyone else is fleeing. Insofar as the Democratic party is identified with that social breakdown, it will continue to lose the allegiance of middle-class voters.

Although I understand why you don't want to be judgmental, I think we have to be. In a society where we are

asked to pay for each other's choices through our taxes, there is a considerable resistance to paying for the social costs of those who make individual choices that are self-destructive or destructive to children.

Boxer: But the reason it costs is that during the Reagan-Bush years, we dismantled many of the social programs that would have supported the children of these single-parent families.

Ferraro: And this reflects our lack of responsibility as a society—not only to children, but to the elderly as well. I stayed with my mother for three weeks in the hospital when she was ill, then took her into my home and took off work for the next seven weeks so that I could stay with her and take care of her. But the society doesn't provide good ways to support people when they want to take care of each other.

Gabel: I don't think that it works to tell people in a moralistic way that they have the responsibility to do it. What people would respond to is a political program that appeals to the value of caretaking for the elderly, that articulates the value of having a fundamental connection with our parents, and then helps people understand that it is because of our commitment to this kind of value that we want to make specific legislative or policy decisions. We tried to do this in the January/February issue of *Tikkun* when we proposed some "meaning-centered" television advertisements that liberals and progressives could use. For example, we put forward an ad about the conflict someone was facing between career and caring for parents. But the point was that we attempted to link the specific problem to an evocative expression of the desire for emotional connection, rather than getting bogged down, as liberals and progressives often have, in the details of a particular policy idea that is presented in ways that are very far from the underlying sense that we understand what daily life feels like for ordinary people. To let people know that what we want is to build a society in which people can feel real caring in their daily lives—that is a politics of meaning. It's not about dead, rational policy proposals but an evocative vision that gives policies or programs life and purpose.

Tikkun: How do we change the mass perception of what the liberal and progressive forces stand for? How do we undermine the perception that all we stand for is the maximization of the individual's right to do whatever he or she pleases, that our primary enemy is everything that constrains the individual, and hence that we are hostile to anything in family life or in the larger life of a community that puts us under obligations to others and therefore might limit our ability to do whatever we want whenever we want to?

Even at the moments when liberals seem to transcend individual interests, they are perceived to be doing so only to identify with larger groups that are extensions of self-interest, through what is termed interest-group politics. The quintessential left-liberal political strategy has been to build a coalition of different interests rather than forging a common vision. The model, however, has been one of each group pursuing its own particular interests, and making alliances with others on the model of "you give me support for what I want and I'll give you support for what you want." There has been no sense of transcending each group's particular interest in order to articulate a common interest that would embody shared or universal values. Here Ferraro's emphasis on family and Boxer's emphasis on progressive nationalism need to be given careful consideration.

Meyerson: The end of the cold war has offered us a special opportunity to define the Democratic party as the force that could become the representative of the whole society and not just the particular interests. For example, in the trade issue the Democrats could begin to represent the larger shared interests.

Boxer: This is a golden moment. We spent as much as eight trillion dollars defending our allies in Japan, Korea, and the Common Market in Europe—and yet these societies are doing better than we are. It's time for us to say, "We need to renegotiate our relationship and bring these dollars home so that we can build a stronger and more competitive and healthy America."

Gabel: Instead of creating community the way the Right does, by identifying external enemies, shouldn't we instead be emphasizing those aspects of the history of American life and culture—liberty, social justice, and the building of a democratic culture—that give us a vision of the kind of community we actually want, and hence suggest a patriotism built around values we can believe in? Isn't that better than a xenophobic patriotism of the sort George Bush would want to advocate, one built around antagonism toward Japan?

Siegel: I think the Republicans are vulnerable on the failure of big business to invest in America. But then we need to talk about how to decide on what it is in our best interests to invest in collectively. Now here there is a conceptual problem related to the kinds of arguments that arose around our discussion of the family. If we don't think we as a society can choose what kinds of

lifestyles deserve our support, why do we think we can choose what sorts of industries deserve our investments? We are a peculiarly disabled society because we are unable to make decisions about these fundamental issues. If we want to have an industrial policy, we have to have some kind of agreement about what we want to achieve, and before that we need some agreement on what values we hold.

Meyerson: Actually, I think industrial policy is totally decoupled from the question of values. Here in Los Angeles over the past month, the historically free-trade politics of the region have all but vanished in the face of defense cutbacks and the awarding of a major manufacturing contract by a governmental agency to the Sumitomo corporation (it's since been revoked). People are talking industrial policy here quite intently now and that's a function of economic necessity.

Kamarck: To get to the underlying anxiety about patriotism, we can't simply say, "Let's bring it back home and address domestic needs and that's the new patriotism." There is a perception of the Democrats as a party that is isolationist and congenitally adverse to ever using force in the world. Some of the candidates in the Democratic primaries will be able to convey the sense that they could be commanders-in-chief and some will not be able to cross that threshold. We have lost elections because some of our past candidates have not been credible as commander-in-chief.

Meyerson: Many Americans now perceive that we are in an economic war—and the Democrats might look like they could be commanders-in-chief for that war. But they should not go along with Bush on some aspects of his free-trade agreements, for example with Mexico. A renewed economic nationalism has to protect America's working class.

Siegel: And many Americans understand that an important part of the problem is failed management. When GM fires 70,000 workers and then rewards its top management with exorbitant pay increases, many Americans understand that we have a system in which managers who fail are nevertheless rewarded.

Gabel: The tax-cut-for-the-middle-class line appeals to the same sense of selfishness as these golden parachutes that top executives have for themselves. There's nothing wrong and everything right with people having more money to meet their basic needs, but the way that this gets represented is very important: It can either reconstitute people in their loneliness and isolation—in which case they want to get as much back from the community as they possibly can, and then that means not only in the form of $200 rebates but also in the form of reducing taxes more generally and sharing less of what they have with others—or it can be done in a language and with an intention to emphasize our shared goals and purposes as a connected community. The problem is how to create a vision of a democratic politics of participation, of overcoming the recession together, that does not use imagery that taps into the kind of individual selfishness that we are opposed to, but instead allows us to see any rebate as a community act in which we are acting together for some shared goals. The $600 or $200 rebate ideas have this problem—they don't really speak to the part of us that wants a better and different society.

Ferraro: I don't see this as an indication of selfishness. Many people feel that they need this money. It's fine to talk about the nontangible things, but when you get down to what real people are talking about, they are thinking, "How am I going to make ends meet?"

Meyerson: The Democrats have been perceived to be the party of "tax me and spend on someone else." The one constituency they've held best has been the elderly. That's hardly because they've been attuned to the politics of cultural liberalism. It *is* because these people experienced the New Deal and subsequently the GI Bill, Federal Housing Administration loans, and now Social Security. They saw how government could be used in a positive way to fulfill human needs. So I think we need more than a reorientation of values—we need a reinvention of government.

Kamarck: This is critical to the success of the Democratic party. The two most successful programs we ever had were the GI Bill and Social Security. Both were based on people giving something to the country and then getting something back. If you are going to build widespread support for a new liberal vision, you have to build it around the concept of reciprocal obligation—whether that's college students from whom you ask for national service, welfare mothers whom you ask to participate in some kind of training program, or welfare fathers whom you ask to make some kind of ongoing commitment to their babies. Liberalism failed when it began to look at the government as just something that gave out money without responsibilities attached.

Meyerson: Another part of what made these programs attractive was their universality. They were not advanced

for a particular section of the society, but for anyone who fit certain very broad categories.

Ferraro: What is the reciprocity around Social Security? The FICA tax? Come on, that is not paying close to the full cost of what Social Security has to pay out. We are going to take out a lot more than we put in. Now I'm all for reciprocity, but what are you going to do with young girls who've become mothers—how are they going to give back?

Kamarck: If you give them a learning center and provide them with daycare in that learning center, you're doing everybody a favor.

Ferraro: You're talking about spending more money on social programs. But there's so much resistance to it.

Siegel: Reciprocity will only work if it's real—if there are consequences for not being reciprocal.

Ferraro: Like what? Denying the young mother the money to feed her baby?

Siegel: Like reducing her allotment marginally. If in addition to providing training and daycare you don't do this, you are not serious about dealing with long-term social breakdown.

Gabel: I don't understand the strong sense of responsibility for welfare recipients unless it is part of a demand for an equally strong sense of responsibility and reciprocity on the part of everyone else in the population. It has an offensive quality to me. But it can't just be a knee-jerk reaction to the Right's attack on welfare recipients. It has to be part of everyone giving something back to the culture and receiving a sense of identity, self-worth, and participation from the culture.

Siegel: Yes, it has to be across the board, and it has to be directed at people in the boardrooms of the corporations as well as at welfare recipients. But Democrats have underestimated the degree to which Americans now fear a permanent underclass—and are unwilling to spend their money on social programs that are merely designed to sustain rather than to eliminate that problem. They move to the suburbs to escape that problem, and they don't want to spend their money on approaches that seem to perpetuate rather than eliminate the problem.

Ferraro: I agree that we need to make the problem go away; but I don't think we can do that by attempting to legislate values.

Siegel: If we pass judgment on people who are unwilling to support their elderly parents, and I think we should, we also ought to pass judgment on those welfare recipients who have children without being able to support them or give them a decent chance in life. It's argued that we can't legislate values, but why would we expect that Americans will without limit put their tax dollars out to help people with whom they share few common values? It doesn't happen. Part of the reason the civil-rights movement was able to legislate values was because it appealed to a common creed.

Ferraro: I am not making a moral distinction between caring for one's parents and caring for one's children.I am making a distinction between our desire to inculcate values and our ability to *realize* that goal. As for the civil-rights movement, I am not sure Bull Connor and Martin Luther King, Jr. really shared the same creed.

Gabel: One such common value might be charity, lovingness, caring for others without regard to how well they perform for us, values that embody an ethos of love rather than only values that embody a stern sense of reciprocal responsibility.

Kamarck: Anybody who has ever been a parent knows that an important part of loving children is setting standards for them, telling them what they can do and ought not to do. Why? Because you love them. We are not talking about legislating complex values. We are talking about very simple things: If you are going to get government money to support you and your child, then you and your child show up for a set of programs that the government prepares for you—education and training programs, drug care if you have a drug problem—and the government has to provide you with decent courses and decent daycare. It's your responsibility to work yourself up to the point where you have the skills to get off of welfare. We shouldn't say to those people who are poor, "Here's a check, don't bother us."

Ferraro: I agree with the specific proposals that Elaine Kamarck makes, but I think it is unrealistic to believe that we would be successful in all cases at instilling the values you wish to instill. And what if there are people who are simply incapable intellectually or emotionally of participating in the programs you suggest? Do we simply say to them, "Sorry, we can't help you"? And that dilemma puts us back to the fundamentals: Republicans can walk away from such people and abandon them to additional suffering; Democrats can't turn their backs in that way.

Tikkun: One way that the Right sometimes deflects attention from what is positive in a progressive program is to "play the race card."

Kamarck: One way to avoid the race card is to talk about the underlying fears about crime, be tough on crime, and then when the Right tries to use crime as a code for race you can call that move for what it is.

Tikkun: The resentment about race goes deeper than the issue of crime. Through the research that we've done at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health (the parent body of *Tikkun*) we discovered that many workers, even in well-paying jobs, feel terrible about themselves and their jobs and have very low self-esteem, to the extent that those jobs do not offer them opportunities to use their intelligence, creativity, and ability to cooperate with others. This hidden injury of class is typically ignored by the Democrats. In fact, the message that many white people think they are hearing from Democrats is something like this: "You white people have had your chance to compete on a level playing field and to get what you could get. So if you aren't feeling good about your life, that's your own fault. Blacks or other oppressed groups, on the other hand, have not had a fair chance; so you are being selfish if you complain about your own lives and your own pain. Now you should be willing to make sacrifices for those who did not have as good a chance as you." This message, understandably, makes many people feel angry, misunderstood, and disrespected. The pain that these people feel is discounted or denied.

Siegel: Not this year. This is the first post-Communist, postprosperity election. So we are hearing very different kinds of things on the campaign trail.

Tikkun: Yes, it's true that the candidates in 1992 are speaking about the economic woes of many Americans, but they are not speaking about the crisis in meaning, the kinds of issues that were raised in the "Ads for Democrats" that we ran in the magazine.

Meyerson: The acknowledgment of economic pain and programs to rebuild the economy aren't merely economic; they can move beyond that, as they did in the thirties.

Gabel: Recognizing the emotional pain, the need that people have for confirmation and validation, is a prerequisite for thawing out their tendency to deal with that need by creating false communities that are defined in terms of their opposition to other groups. The recognition of the pain of the white middle-class or working-class person, their lack of community and not just their lack of money, is the prerequisite for their capacity to feel compassion for others who also suffer, like Blacks and other minorities.

Kusnet: I worked in union organizing campaigns for seven years, and when you're talking about workplace issues, you can't just focus on people's pain. You have to give people a sense of hope. You have to build on the pride they take in trying to do a good job and their desire to have more of a voice in decision making so they can do a better job.

Siegel: I'm moderately hopeful this year; the Democratic party may fly far better this year, and we shouldn't underestimate the self-destructiveness of the Republicans over the past sixteen years. The Republicans have lost their connection with the country, the sure-footedness that they had, and there is a powerful sense of panic emanating from the White House.

It was striking to see how well Bill Clinton was doing before he was sandbagged, and how many left-liberals were signing on with him (Ruth Messinger and Ronnie Elridge, leading Upper West Side Manhattan liberals, were signed on as Clinton delegates). There's a shift of mood, and the kind of balance between social compassion and social responsibility that Clinton represents is now more acceptable than it would have been to Democratic party liberals four years ago. And Clinton has been going after corporate irresponsibility as well—insisting that big business also has to be held accountable. It is that sense of shared responsibility as citizens that should link everyone in the society and should be the basis for a progressive politics in 1992.

Meyerson: Although Tom Harkin is supposed to represent the "old liberalism," he's also very clear in talking about universal programs rather than the narrow interest-group programs with which Democrats have been identified since 1965.

Gabel: With all due respect, I find all this discussion of responsibility and standards and good citizenship kind of bone-chilling. It's all superego and no id. The best elements of the Democratic party legacy, whether we're talking about the New Deal or the Warren Court era or whatever, has been a certain social feeling, a transcendant impulse that aims at equality, justice, and new possibilities for community. Although I understand the resentment toward victimized interest groups that just demand and take, this new rhetoric of responsibility is just too puritanical and lifeless for me. It might be a winning formula in today's climate, but it doesn't evoke the world that I want. □

FICTION

Madagascar

Steven Schwartz

This is a story I know so well.

My father, who is twenty-one, is on his way home from finding food for his family. He has traded a gold brooch for a bottle of milk, some vegetables, and a little meat. With his blue eyes and blond hair, my father is the only one in the family who has any chance to pass for gentile on the streets. He makes sure to sit on a public bench, to pick out a paper from the trash and look comfortable, then go on. Among the many edicts against Jews—no traveling in motor cars, no leaning out windows, no using balconies open to the street, no going outside after dark—is one that forbids them to sit on park benches.

On the way home he takes another chance, meeting his fiancée in South Amsterdam. Before the deportations started they were to be married; now they must wait until the war ends, each of them hidden in different areas of the city.

After dark when he returns to the apartment cellar where his father, mother, and sister hide, he sees the Gestapo drive up. It is May 26, 1943. Tomorrow he will learn that the Great Raid has taken away all the remaining Jews, those in rest homes, in mental institutions, in orphanages, those too sick to walk, those who have cooperated with the Germans thinking it would spare them. Even the entire Jewish Council will be shipped to the labor camps. Now he knows nothing, only that he must avoid the house, that if he is caught out after curfew he will be imprisoned or shot. He steps into a bakery where the baker—a gentile though trusted friend of the family—offers to hide my father. If someone has informed on the family and the Gestapo do not find all the members, the baker knows they will search the whole block; they have been through here before. They will check the back room, the bins of flour, the attic above. They will tap the floor and walls for any hollow spaces. But, ironically, they will not check the ovens.

The baker tells my father to climb into an oven no longer in use. At first my father resists. He is afraid. Afraid he will die in there. But there is no other way. The Gestapo will not think to look in such an obvious yet unlikely place.

My father crawls in. The sirens stop. His family is taken away to Majdanek, never to return. He lives in the oven until the end of the war, coming out every two hours when business has slowed sufficiently so that he may stretch. Some days the baker stays so busy that my father must be inside for three, four, and once even six hours. Without room to turn over or extend his legs, he remains curled up in a ball. On one occasion, much to his humiliation, he must go to the bathroom in his pants. The baker and his wife kindly provide him with a long apron while his trousers are washed in back. In the oven, he makes up waltzes in his head and has long, complex discussions with himself, marshaling arguments for each side, as to which of the two Strausses, father or son, is the true Waltz King, despite the son being known by the title. He re-creates each note of their compositions and discusses the works with a panel of experts, but always delays the final vote another day so he may weigh the evidence more carefully and reconsider the merits of "Joy and Greetings," "Lorelei-Rheinklange," "Shooting Stars," and a hundred others.

After the war my father will listen to music in a high-backed chair. The record player during my childhood, a hi-fi, will be near a whisper in volume, perhaps the loudness at which he originally heard the melodies in his head. When I come into the room, he does not mind being disturbed, but asks me to sit and listen with him. I am ten. "Ah, now," he says raising his hand when the French horns begin to play. "Our favorite part." I do not know if "our" includes me or someone else or if he just speaks of himself in the plural. Soon he closes his eyes, smiles, and extends his hand for mine. Although we are sitting down, me at his feet, our arms sway together, my father waltzing with me from this position. Softly he releases my hand, tells me I have good timing and to remember practice practice practice. Mastering the clarinet is no easy task—even for a bright ten-year-old. He rises from his chair, pulls down the sides of his coat—on Sunday afternoons he wears a jacket and tie at home—returns the record to its sleeve, closes the lid of the hi-fi, and stands with his hands behind his back for a few seconds as though making a silent prayer.

Steven Schwartz is the author of a recent collection of stories, Lives of the Fathers *(University of Illinois Press, 1991). He teaches English at Colorado State University. His fiction has received the Nelson Algren Award, the O. Henry Award, and the Sherwood Anderson Prize.*

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Then he says, "Ephram, would you like to accompany me on a walk in the park?" I have my coat on within five seconds.

In ninth grade, I am caught shoplifting. I steal a silver pen from a drugstore. I am taken to the police station in Haverford, the small town where we live outside of Philadelphia and where my father teaches European history at Haverford College. My mother is in New York visiting her sisters, so I must call my father. The department secretary informs me that he should return from class within the hour.

"Are you at home, Ephram?"

"I'm at the police station," I say, shocked by my own admission. Perhaps I want to confess right away and get it over with, not hide the shame I feel, or perhaps I want to boast.

Without comment, she makes a note of my situation and promises she will get the message to my father immediately.

While I wait for my father in front of the sergeant's desk, on a plastic chair of a faded aqua color, I think how I've wanted to succeed at something, most recently sports. The basketball game I made sure my father attended, positive I would be put in since we were playing a much weaker team, we wound up only narrowly winning, coming from behind. I sat on the bench the whole time. "Very stirring match," my father said afterward, walking me to the car, his arm around me. He knew I felt bad, of course, but there was nothing he could do, nothing I could do.

I lack the speed and agility to be first string; and by this season I've lost interest in sports, don't even try out for the team, and instead have fallen in with a group of kids who hang out at the edge of the parking lot, wear pointed shoes with four-inch Cuban heels, pitch quarters during lunch, comb their hair in ducktails (a style that requires me to sleep with my hair parted the opposite way so that the curls will straighten out by morning), and who generally get in trouble for everything from smoking cigarettes to belching "The Star-Spangled Banner" in back of Spanish class. It is 1964. School has become intolerable.

My father soon comes to the police station. I am released into his custody and we leave the old armory building of massive, buff sandstone, me in a blue corduroy coat that says Haverford Panthers, my father with his walking stick and tweed overcoat, a cream-colored scarf tucked under his chin. He puts his hand lightly behind me and I involuntarily sink back against his open palm, no easy feat going down a flight of steps. I keep expecting him to ask me what happened. Though I know he won't raise his voice, he never does, let alone physically punish me, I anticipate a lecture, as is his custom when I've misbehaved, which to be honest has not happened all that often. An only child, I have learned how to fulfill my parents' wishes better than my own. They have little reason to find fault with me, so trained am I in the most subtle of ways—a raised eyebrow from my father, a frown from my mother—to find fault with myself first.

"Why don't we walk a little bit, Ephram." We stop at the post office. My father buys a roll of stamps and some airmail envelopes for letters to Holland. We have no relatives over there anymore but he keeps a regular correspondence with friends and some members of the Amsterdam Symphony. Before the war he, too, had studied the clarinet and planned to become a professional musician, a source of conflict with his father who wanted my father to have a career in business like himself. When I was younger I always eagerly awaited the letters from Holland so I could steam off the stamps for my collection.

We sit down on a bench in front of the post office. It is December but the sun is bright enough for us to rest a moment outdoors.

I am prepared to apologize, no longer able to stand my father's silence. At the same time I want to explain that school offers me nothing but hypocrisy, lies, false values, and mush-headed teachers who haven't read a book themselves in years, and that I know this frustration has something to do with what I've done. But before I have the chance, he says he wants to tell me something about the war, one subject in which I am intensely interested because I always hope he will speak, as he rarely does, of his own experience.

"You may not know," he says, "that Hitler had several plans for the Jews. The camps came much later, after he had ruled out other possibilities, such as selling Jews to different countries. He also considered sending the Jews to the island of Madagascar. He wanted to permanently exile them there. Not destroy them, just isolate them on a remote island. This was to be his answer to the Jewish question. I have imagined many times what this situation may have been. I see the beaches, I see the shops, I see the clothes my mother and father wear there—light fabrics, colorful, soft cotton, a little lace on holidays. The sea is blue, the houses white. My mother does not like the heat, but my father welcomes it every morning by doing calisthenics on the balcony. They have settled here, done well, as Jews will do most anywhere, even in Nazi Madagascar. But you see how childish this is of me, don't you? That I want there to be a refuge in the midst of such undeniable evil. Perhaps it is why I decided to study history after the war. I have the liberty to make sense of the many possible pasts historians can

always imagine—but the duty to choose only one. Sometimes I fail to honor my task because it is too unbearable. I do not think you are in a very happy period of your life now, Ephram. We are perhaps letting you down, your mother and I. I hope, though, that you will see I am far from perfect and struggle to make meaning of things as much as you do. It is my wish only that you will not harm others in the process, nor assault your own dignity. Leave yourself a small measure of respect in reserve. Always. You see, even in my worst memories—and I know nothing that can be worse for a man than to remember his mother and father and sister while he walks free in the world—even here I have left myself an escape to Madagascar. So allow yourself the same opportunity and do not think so poorly of your own promise that you must succumb to the disgrace of crime. You are bright, imaginative, resourceful. Surely there is a way out of whatever hell it is you too experience. I do not doubt that you can do better than this."

Chastened, I sit in silence with my father while we drive home. After his intercession, charges will be dropped by the drugstore. My mother learns nothing of the incident, and I soon separate from the group of misfits I've joined earlier. I also give up the clarinet when I discover—as my teacher agrees—that I feel nothing for the instrument.

My college roommate freshman year is named Marshall X. Tiernan. I have chosen to go to a small liberal arts college in Ohio that is not too far from Haverford but far enough so I feel I'm leaving home. Every Tuesday afternoon he asks if I can vacate the room for three hours and fifteen minutes (exactly) so he can listen to music.

"I don't mind if you listen while I'm here," I tell him.

He shakes his head. He must have privacy. Marshall X. Tiernan, reedy and tall as elephant grass but not nearly so uncultivated, has an enormous collection of classical records that takes up one quarter of our room. He is studying to be an engineer. Unlike the rest of the men in my dorm, who in the fall of 1968 have grown their hair long and wear patched jeans and army surplus coats, Marshall dresses in Arrow shirts with button-down collars and keeps a well-inked pen protector in his pocket. He has an unfortunate stutter and does not socialize beyond a fellow engineering student he knows from home. We have a respectful relationship, but I can't say that Marshall is a friend.

I agree to leave him alone on Tuesday afternoons, but one time I come back early. I have forgotten some notes that I need to take with me to the library. Expecting to hear music outside the door, I hear nothing and decide to go in. On the bed, with large padded earphones, is Marshall, his thin body rigid as slate. He sees me but does not acknowledge that I am here. His clothes, the sheets, everything is drenched with sweat. His legs tremble, a kind of seizure starts. When the record ends, a composition by Satie, Marshall sits up, quickly strips the bed, throws the sheets in the closet (Tuesday the maids bring new linen), changes his clothes, and returns to his desk to study.

We do not discuss the incident.

Shortly afterward he drops out of school and moves home. I have the privacy of my own room, a lucky situation that enables me to spend time alone with Jessica, whom I've met at an antiwar meeting. One night while I am telling her, with some amusement I am sorry to say, about Marshall X. Tiernan, I suddenly stop. Jessica says later the look on my face is as if I've seen a ghost, for that is what happens. I suddenly see—no, *feel*—a twenty-one-year-old man curled painfully in a baker's oven, his body kept alive by music.

Thanksgiving vacation my sophomore year I bring Jessica home with me. Several years older than I and a senior in anthropology, she helps my mother with Thanksgiving dinner, talks at length with my father who retains a lifelong interest in Margaret Mead, and makes such a positive impression on them both that my mother whispers to me as we are about to leave for the airport, *"She's a jewel."*

But at school I sink into a profound depression. My grades plummet and although Jessica tries to stand by me, I manage to chase even her away. She finds her own apartment yet continues to call every day to check up on me. I become more withdrawn, however, and after a while I ask her to stop phoning. I watch television and eat chocolate donuts, drink milk from the carton and stare at the dark smudge marks my lips leave on the spout.

My father appears one afternoon, a surprise visit, he says. I know by the look on his face, though, that he has come because of Jessica. I burst into tears when I see him.

"What has happened, Ephram?" he says.

But I don't know what has happened, only that I can no longer study, I don't care about school and have no chance of passing finals; I don't care if I flunk out.

"Your mother is very worried. She wanted to come with me but I thought it best if I came alone. Is there anything I can do to help you? Is there something wrong in school, you don't like your courses, the pressure perhaps of too many hours. . . ."

"I haven't been to class in weeks," I say. "I can't go. Even a trip to the store is overwhelming." I start to cry again. "I want to go home. I want to go back with you."

"But what will you do back there?" my father says. "There is nothing at home for you now. You have your studies here, your friends."

I look at my father. As always, he is dressed neatly, and warmly, a blue blazer and gray slacks, a wool vest under his coat. Meanwhile, my apartment remains a mess, dishes in the sink, clothes everywhere, my hair unwashed.

"I'll find a job, I'll work and make money."

"And live at home?"

"Yes, what's wrong with that?"

My father pauses. "I don't know. I would think that you'd enjoy the freedom of living on your own."

"I have freedom and privacy at home. You've never told me what to do or when to come in. I'm not happy here."

"But Ephram, changing the place you live will not solve your problems. You need to get to the bottom of this."

"I don't care, I just want to go home! Can't you understand that?" I am almost screaming. "I have to go back. I can't make it here!"

For the rest of the winter, I work in a bubble gum factory near Philadelphia. It is miserable, but the more miserable the better because I feel as if I deserve the punishment of tedious, demeaning work for failing in school. I am paid minimum wage, $1.85 an hour. So much sugar hangs in the air—we throw bags of it into a mixing contraption resembling the gigantic maw of a steam shovel—that the people who have worked for years at the factory have lost many of their teeth. The gum itself comes out on long (and unsanitary) splintered boards that I carry to racks, which are taken to another station where these long tubular strips of bubble gum—more like waxy pink sausages than gum at this stage—are cut into bite-size pieces with a tool akin to a large pizza wheel.

One day at the beginning of spring I receive a letter from the draft board. According to their records my student deferment has expired; I am now eligible to be considered for military service.

My father comes home early from his office hour at school. He himself hates the war, the senseless bombing and killing. He has marched with his college's students and protested the presence on campus of recruiters from a chemical company that makes napalm. He has, in fact, been more active than I, who have withdrawn into the routine and oblivion of factory labor, for which there are no deferments.

"What are your plans?" my father asks.

"I don't know. Canada, I suppose, if all else fails."

"And what is 'all else'?"

"A medical deferment."

"On what basis?"

"My mental condition."

"But you have never been to a psychiatrist. You have no history."

"I don't know then." I shrug. I feel numb, resigned. Why not basic training and then the jungles of Southeast Asia? Could it be much worse than the bubble gum factory?

"You will not go. That is all there is to it. We will make sure of that."

"And how will you do that?"

"We'll hide you, if necessary."

I look at my father and almost laugh. But I can see he is serious, alarmed.

"What are you talking about—hide me? Where?"

He picks up his newspaper and folds it back once, twice, three times until he has a long strip of news in front of him. It is the idiosyncratic way he likes to read the paper—folding it like a map until he is down to a small, tight square of information the size of a wallet or obituary. I think that it must make him feel some control over the world's chaotic events to read about them in such miniature, compressed spaces.

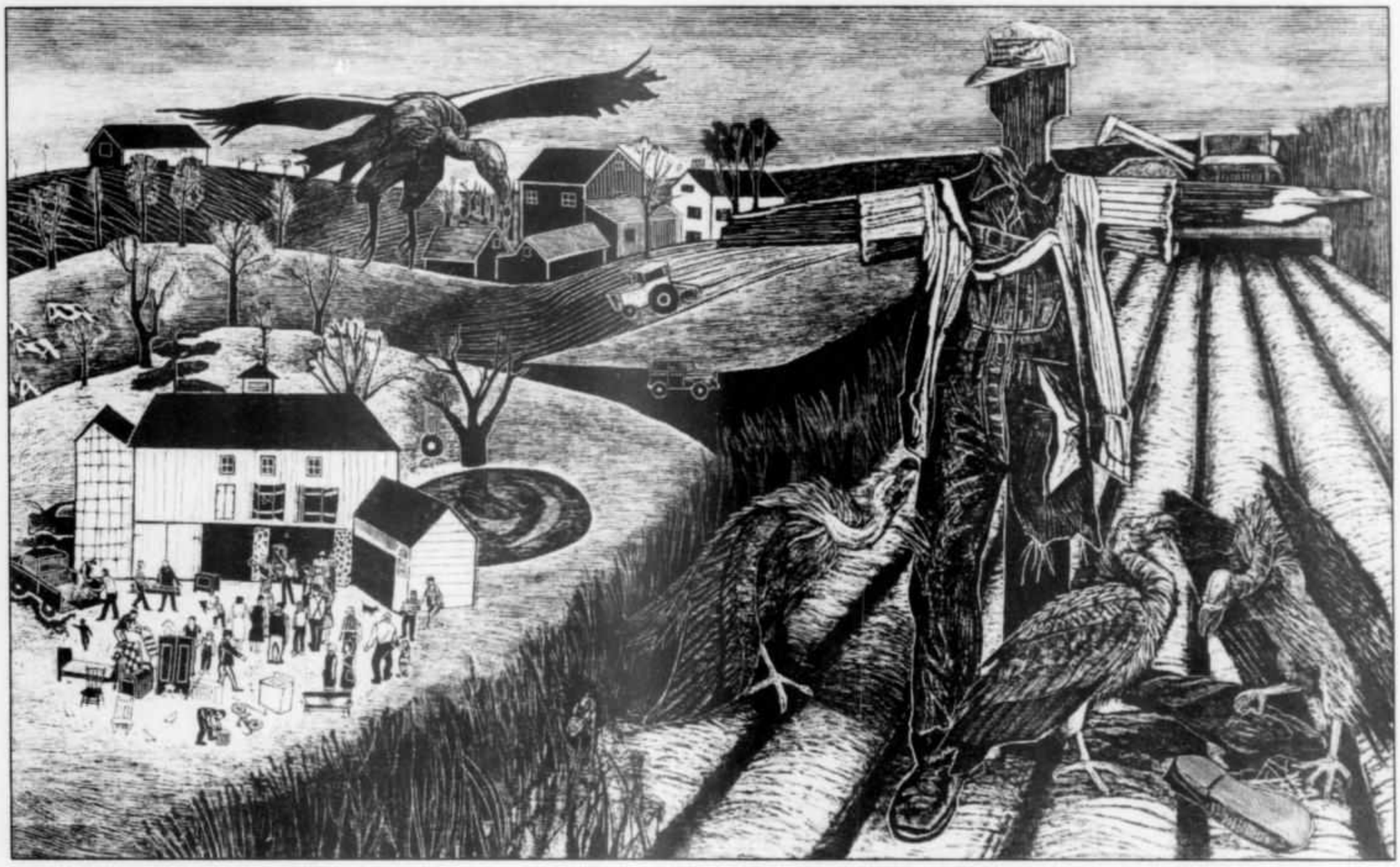
My mother brings in a stuck jar for one of us to loosen, and my father puts down his newspaper, which pops open on his lap like an accordion. I am still thinking about his wanting to hide me, aware that the draft has touched off buried fears for him, a flashback to the war, some instinctive response to the personal terror of his family being taken away from him. "I'll get out of it, Dad," I say. "Don't worry. I won't go."

"Don't worry, don't worry, is that what you think is the problem here? You have put yourself in this position, though I begged you not to. What is there to do now but worry!" He stands up. "I am *sick* with worry, if you must know. This is my fault. I should have demanded you stay in school, not let you come here!"

I have never heard him raise his voice like this. His body begins to tremble, and from the kitchen my mother hurries in with her hand over her heart. "What is going on here?" she says. "What are you arguing about?"

"Nothing," my father answers. "The argument is finished," and he goes into his study and closes the door—a sight I am used to from childhood. I hear him weep but rather than sadness I feel a great relief; finally, something I've done has touched him.

I do not get drafted but receive a high number in the first lottery. The long and tiresome depression, the deadness I have felt, is replaced with the exhilaration of a survivor, a life reclaimed. I make plans to visit Europe, use the money I've saved from the bubble gum factory to travel for three months. Guidebooks about England, France, Spain, and Italy cover my bed. I pore



over them and come up with a tentative itinerary. But when I actually get to Europe, I find I make a detour from England to Holland. I locate the Jewish quarter where my father hid during the war, find his school—the Vossius Gymnasium—and then what I've come for: the bakery. It is still there, although the original owners who saved my father have long ago died. I explain to the current owners who I am; they tell me in broken English that yes, they have heard what happened here during the war, they know about my father and the Koops, who saved him; the story is legend. "Does the oven still exist by any chance?" I ask.

They take me to the back, outside to a shed. It is here, covered with a tablecloth. I ask them if I can be by myself for a few moments and they say certainly, no one will disturb me.

A squat and solid object, the oven stands only chest high. I pull open the door and look inside. The opening is deeper than it is wide, the height a little less than two feet. I hoist myself up to sit on the edge. Then I swing my legs around and push my body in feet first. My neck is back against the left edge. I cannot go any farther. My shoulder sticks out too much even when I bend my knees into my chest. I do not understand how he did this, but I am determined to fit inside, so I slide out again and try to enter without my shoes and without my jacket. I tuck my legs under and pull my head inside, my back curved tight as an archer's bow. I hook my finger through the match hole and close the door. The stove smells of mildew and carbon; the scaled roughness of the iron ceiling grates against my cheek. It is pitch black except for the match hole through which I can see. I put my eye up to it and watch. Soon I hear footsteps and I feel frightened, but the footsteps recede into the distance and the bakery becomes silent.

Many years later my parents come out to celebrate the occasion of our son's fifth birthday. My father helps Philip build the space station they have brought him. I watch them play together, my father with no awareness of the world around him other than this mission to be his grandson's assistant.

While my mother and Judith, my wife, put Philip to bed, my father and I have coffee on the porch. It is a cool summer night and we are in Boulder, Colorado, where the shimmering night sky looks, to my parents, like a planetarium. Judith works in the university's office of communications, while I teach literature. Like my father, I have become a professor.

"What are you going to do now?" I ask him. He is on transitional retirement, half-time teaching, and is scheduled to leave the college next year. "Will you finally go to Europe?"

"Perhaps," he says, "but your mother's back may not permit it."

I nod. The trip out here has cost her a great deal of pain, which she has accepted stoically. If she walks for

(Continued on p. 92)

BOOK REVIEW

Sewing Jewish Remnants into a New Tallit

Arthur Waskow

Saving Remnants: Feeling Jewish in America by Sara Bershtel and Allen Graubard. Free Press, 1992, 322 pp.

Sara Bershtel and Allen Graubard went out a dozen years ago to observe American Jews who had come of age in the postwar period and defined their Jewishness in a fully American context—not as immigrants or the children of immigrants. During those years they have interviewed hundreds of people: Orthodox Jews, Zionist Jews, Marxist Jews, Reform Jews, newly observant Jews, and unaffiliated Jews.

At first, they found few of the postwar generation who were Jewishly involved and excited. But over the years, the numbers increased. And not only the numbers: The range of creative approaches to remaking Jewish life and the depth of spiritual engagement seemed to grow apace.

Through interview after interview in *Saving Remnants,* Bershtel and Graubard introduce us to a sparkling sample of these newly creative Jews. Yet what they see and describe is much more interesting than what they analyze and conclude. For they can't believe their eyes.

They would rather believe their minds—which are convinced that modernity is the new Almighty. Modern life has not only shattered the old forms of Jewish peoplehood, the authors contend; it has made it impossible to create new forms of rich and continuing Jewish life and community. All these forms, they say, "no matter how vivid and compelling, cannot escape the fragility that modernity imposes on any enterprise essentially dependent on individual choice and commitment."

Whether this is true is, of course, an important question not only for Jews but for all human beings who seek to live in community and to achieve wholeness in their lives. And so is a deeper question, one that Bershtel and Graubard elide: Is "modernity" in the sense in which they mean it a permanent and unchangeable social structure—indeed, as Absolute and Almighty as older concepts of God? Or can Jews—and all of us who must wrestle with modernity's discontents—draw on what we find healthy in modernity even as we seek to create new forms of community?

Many of the Jews whose stories are recounted in this book are precisely the people who are groping their way toward such a social transformation. Bershtel and Graubard see them, but cannot hear them. Where one expects analysis from *Saving Remnants,* there is instead often a sort of analytical sleight-of-hand: What we see does not matter, cannot matter.

Bershtel and Graubard interview scores of Jews who are newly delighted by and committed to Jewish prayer and Jewish celebrations of the cycles of the earth, sun, and moon—and of life itself. But this evidence only leads the authors to conclude that this commitment is not really religious, only social. Why?

Because the celebrants do not see God as chiefly transcendent and exterior, a maker of miracles that reverse the natural order, but rather as the "still small voice" within. Yet the Prophet Elijah also heard God in the same way; and some of the great Chasidic rebbes saw the universe as "God wrapped in robes of God so as to appear to be material." Should these religious commitments, too, be written off as secularization?

When they turn to the political phase of the Jewish renewal movement, Bershtel and Graubard resort to the same sort of non-explanation. They interview Jews who are developing new Jewish approaches to progressive and radical politics—and then explain that Judaism is not really a critical or progressive tradition. Instead they argue that only the breakup of the ghetto prompted Jews to think of themselves as outsiders who were oppressed alongside other outsiders; thus by Bershtel and Graubard's account, modern Jews sought social transformation so that they themselves could be liberated. And indeed, this *kind* of radicalism was new—it had to be, since it was a response to a particular historical configuration.

But the progressive and radical strand in Jewish thought and action from which this modern response drew much of its impetus was hardly new. In other historical situations, it took other forms. For over a thousand years in Christian Europe before this, and for five hundred years in the land of Israel before that, Jews remembered oppression by Pharaoh, honored prophets who had spoken out against Jewish kings and who had cried out for social justice. And within their own communities, Jews tried to restrain the rich and protect the poor. There was, of course, always an internal struggle within the Jewish people to give both voice and action to this progressive strand of Jewish tradition. But since when does the struggle over a tradition negate the existence of that tradition? So the authors' seemingly radical historical rejection of Jewish radicalism itself only skims the surface of history.

And the implications of this analysis are far from antiquarian. The authors present their interpretation as if it also negated the existence of Jewish progressives who today are trying to construct a kind of Jewish progressivism out of something more than modernity's fragmentation of the ghetto. The logic here is only psychologic:

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(1) Modernity has smashed the premodern forms of Jewish life. (2) The only "modern" form of Jewish community—ex-ghetto Jewish radicalism—was fleeting. (3) That's it. There are no other options.

The same critical myopia colors their approach to every other subject that falls under their scrutiny. They interview vital new Jewish artists—and explain that the arts do not make a community. They recount the struggles of Jewishly committed feminists and gay liberationists; but they cannot imagine a new and vibrant Judaism that has learned from the life experience of women and gay men. They present the compelling testimony of a Black woman who has become an active and creative Jew; but they cannot imagine a non-ethnic version of Jewish community, reshaped partly by thousands of committed converts.

In short, they present the efforts of a generation of activists and religious innovators as evidence of the decomposition of the old Jewish community. But they miss much of the other side of the story. They seem not to know that there are now whole congregations and neighborhoods of Jewish renewal. And not surprisingly, they cannot see the emerging outlines of a new kind of Jewish community, one that shows promise of digesting modernity—rather than being swallowed up by it or vomiting it out.

Despite its shortcomings, *Saving Remnants* does introduce a remarkable cast of characters. There is a pseudonymous New Yorker obsessed by the nightmare of the Holocaust, and the novelist Leslie Epstein *(King of the Jews),* who more and more finds his writing blocked unless he lets his Jewish persona have its say. There is the *Village Voice* columnist Paul Berman, who sees himself as a neo-Lower-East-Side anarchist.

All these Bershtel and Graubard encompass in their chapter on assimilation. But it turns out that Epstein and Berman speak all the more poignantly from their "assimilated" paths to other Jews who, like them, can no longer bear to be estranged from Jewish life. Their testimony is not evidence of assimilation so much as of new efforts to imagine ways beyond it.

This is not to say that there are no Jews who agree with Bershtel and Graubard. Some of the testimonies they present document hopeless fragmentation and decline: those who still fly the twin tattered banners of self-hatred and of being Jewish only as long as necessary to resist anti-Semitism.

But then the authors look at "mainstream" people like the feisty and creative Ursula Sherman of Berkeley, and they altogether miss the point: Swimming here in the mainstream is a self-aware activist for Jewish renewal, with a strong concern for a progressive Jewish politics and a serious Jewish spirituality. She is evidence neither of a successful mainstream in the old model nor of a mainstream that is isolated and declining—but rather of one that is being remade. And so with Deborah Kaufman, founder of the Jewish Film Festival, who wearily recalls being attacked by establishmentarians for her dialogues with Palestinians—but who is still able to win space and time from some established institutions for her efforts to renew Jewish culture through film.

Bershtel and Graubard have mistaken diffuseness for dithering, experiment for ephemerality.

How, then, would a more balanced and accurate treatment of the material in *Saving Remnants* look? We might begin by gingerly removing the interview subjects from the cocoons of isolated modernity into which Bershtel and Graubard have exiled them. We might see them instead as strands in a network.

Leslie Epstein, for example, appears in Bershtel and Graubard's study as a lone and lonely writer. But he does not stand alone. His novels (as he notes, although the authors don't) have an effect on thousands of readers whom he never even gets to meet. So do the novels and poetry of Marge Piercy, who in the last twenty years has gathered a broad readership of women and men, and who in her recent work has more and more fully and joyfully created *post*modern Jewish characters and communities wrestling with the disasters of the last and the next century. (Anyone who paid attention to *Saving Remnants*'s analysis instead of its reportage could hardly have predicted *He, She, and It,* Piercy's newest novel—feminist, kabbalist, kibbutznik in outlook.) Epstein, Piercy, and others like them have an impact beyond themselves. Their readers and audiences begin to think and act differently in their own Jewish worlds. What starts in isolation becomes threads of community.

In a similar vein, *Saving Remnants* regards Orthodoxy and avant-garde Jewish renewal as totally separate worlds. But in real life they are not. For example: In a Jewish-renewal neighborhood like Mount Airy in Philadelphia, two lesbians celebrate their marriage within a conventionally structured but religio-politically progressive synagogue. That is an extraordinary event in Jewish history, emerging out of a slow but unmistakable revolution in Jewish gender relations. But this revolution has not been confined to "modern" or postmodern Jewish communities; it has already begun to reach into the Orthodox world. Women in Orthodox synagogues in New York, for example, have started women-only prayer groups. But that is not the end of the matter. These independent-minded Orthodox women then may find themselves trying to davven at the Western Wall in Jerusalem—*together* with the lesbian spiritual activists. And the two sets of women then learn from each other in unexpected ways. But these vital points of contact do not show up in *Saving Remnants.*

The book, in other words, consistently neglects a crucial source of cohesion and strength in the Jewish world: a *movement* for Jewish renewal that in form is much like the general women's movement of the 1970s, a diffuse, multicentered shift in consciousness that flows under all the usual barricades of Jewish life and runs into the different arenas of the Jewish community. This renewal movement has produced new forms and new geographic centers of Jewish creativity in music, prayer, Torah study, art, fund-raising, and social action. What began twenty years ago in small fellowships for prayer and study called *havurot* has now spread throughout the Jewish community.

Half the Jewish people—women—have become empowered to enter a religious life from which their mothers were barred, and tens of thousands have actually done so. They have begun to study Torah in new ways; to lead synagogue prayer in the old mode;

to insist that the prayerbooks be rewritten to include their own spiritual experiences and symbols; and to create new ceremonies for covenanting with newborn daughters, celebrating menarche, honoring menopause and other midlife passages, and dignifying divorces.

Tens of thousands of Jews have organized and supported new approaches to fund-raising in the New Israel Fund, the Jewish Fund for Justice, American Jewish World Service, the Shefa Fund, Hesed International, and Mazon. These new modes of fund-raising have combined three elements that are anathema to the established Federation/United Jewish Appeal models: democratic control over the funds; revitalization of grass-roots Jewish life in Israel, America, and the (now former) Soviet Union; and carrying out the Jewish obligation to aid and empower the poor and desperate in all communities, rather than among Jews alone.

Traditional Jewish festivals have been reinvented and carried into public space in ways unprecedented since the destruction of the Temple. For example, Jews have joined with African-American churches to hold Passover Freedom Seders, and with Dominican friars to hold Shalom Seders in the Nevada desert against "the ultimate Pharaoh" of the H-Bomb. Jews have built "Sukkot Shalom" ("Booths of Peace" for the harvest festival of Sukkot) in Washington's Lafayette Park to challenge both the White House and the Soviet Embassy to pursue nuclear disarmament, and American Jews have danced in the streets on Simchat Torah to support Soviet Jews.

A whole new organization, New Jewish Agenda, has emerged to express passionate disagreement with Israeli foreign policy, to demand equal rights for gay and lesbian Jews, and to seek new ways of combating racism as well as anti-Semitism. Many of its thousands of members had found no previous welcome from any Jewish institution. In the publishing world, *Tikkun* has taken up many of the same issues—and forged a new Jewish politics that combines liberation theology and what some Christians are calling "creation spirituality," together with principled critiques of Israeli policies and American society.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews have used the arenas of art, rather than those of the synagogue, to explore the deepest ethical and spiritual dilemmas and to celebrate the deepest joys of Jewish life. They sing not only the neo-Chasidic songs of Shlomo Carlebach, but also new powerfully spiritual Jewish songs in the American idiom and feminist mode by Debbie Friedman, Linda Hirschorn, and Shefa Gold. Thousands are using modern Jewish dance and body movement as a new way of fusing Torah study with prayer. They have attended powerful dances like Liz Lerman's *The Good Jew?* and music dramas like Elizabeth Swados's *Haggadah, Job,* and *Jerusalem Cantata.* Individual synagogues and *havurot* as well as the international network of the P'nai Or Religious Fellowship and the Reconstructionist congregational federation have woven much of these aesthetic and liturgical materials into new handbooks for prayer and celebration. Tens of thousands of gay and lesbian Jews who were (at best) invisible in organized Jewish life a generation ago have formed synagogues, become rabbis, and begun to redefine Jewish family life.

Bershtel and Graubard have mistaken diffuseness for dithering, experiment for ephemerality. Accordingly, many in the renewal movement might shrug and reject the analysis altogether. But *Saving Remnants* is more useful than that. If the book's predictions of failure were translated into warnings of fragility, into questions and challenges, Bershtel and Graubard's work would gain in provocative power what it has lost in predictive power. They could be heard like the Prophets—warning, "If ... if ... unless ... unless ..."—rather than like owners of a crystal ball. The enterprise of Jewish renewal, like that of making or remaking other healthy communities, certainly faces risks and uncertainties—and it would be useful to read *Saving Remnants* for specific warnings.

To do this, it is necessary to reframe the authors' analysis. They begin with the impact of modernity—by which they mean the culture of individual choice that is empowered by the new technologies of cultural, social, and geographical mobility. They are certainly right in thinking that all old cultures and communities are profoundly challenged by the flood of symbols, stories, machines, weapons, governmental collapses, and class ascents and class declines of the modern age.



A Jewish-renewal wedding marks the union of modern spirituality and ceremonial tradition.

But there are two crucial variables that Bershtel and Graubard do not, I think, accurately assess. One is the depth and persistence of the crisis that modernity is bringing on itself and its own inability to solve that crisis on its own terms. The second is the ability of "extra-modern" communities (some that began before modernity, like the Jews; some that began after, like the gay and lesbian community) to both absorb and resist modernity.

American society in the 1960s experienced several social crises that arose from dislocations that modernity was bringing on itself—dislocations that forced people to begin imagining beyond the modern present. The crises in race and gender relations and those of a failed imperial war and threatened nuclear holocaust all sparked large and intense social movements. These movements affirmed some aspects of modernity, while they resisted others. They affirmed the modernist impulse toward equality—especially between blacks and whites, women and men, Jews and Christians, gay and heterosexual people. They resisted the modernist impulse toward hierarchy, bureaucratization, and destruction of what was face-to-face and local, be it in the decay of neighborhoods or the shattering of ethnic-religious ties or the destruction of the environment.

We are publishing Deborah Weinstein's poem with special prayers for a refu'ah shleymah, *a full recovery from the life-threatening illness she is currently facing. Ms. Weinstein, a psychotherapist, has been an active supporter of* Tikkun *since the start of the magazine.*

B'al Peh

To a friend who lost all her worldly belongings in the Oakland fire

It's a good thing words can curl
And slide and be woody when you need them.
Thank God for stories. A word
Can taste, alter, retaste an old
Recipe, it can tell the color
Gold of the watch your father
Gave you, exactly. The weight of it,
Its feel. A whole tradition was
Passed down, only words in all our wanderings.
Your sons and their children
Will know the shape of baby faces,
The way they changed.
Thank God for stories.
No flood or fire can take them;
They soar, like a Phoenix prevail.

Deborah Weinstein

The movements that emerged in the 1960s grew at an astonishing pace—and eventually faltered. They were, of course, much more immediately successful when they cooperated with modernity in demanding equality than when they resisted it in demanding respect for autonomous communities.

The movement for Jewish renewal began in the complex intertwinings of these responses. For the Jews, modernity has meant both destruction and the emergence of new equalities. Modernity has triggered the rise of Zionism, the Holocaust, the emergence of Israel, the upheavals among Soviet Jews and in the Soviet Union, the emergence of a politically powerful and financially successful American Jewish community, the prevalence of intermarriage, the movement toward full equality for women in Jewish life. Modernity has, in short, produced the collapse of the Rabbinic Age and the need for a new Jewish paradigm.

As Bershtel and Graubard insist, the new search for community and spirituality no longer finds the old ethnic patterns, Jewish or otherwise, automatically given quantities, fixed points on the compass of community and spirituality. People who have grown up in a society where the old ethnic pattern is not a defining feature of their lives find themselves *choosing* a community and spirituality that fit their individual needs, rather than automatically replicating those of their childhood because they know nothing else. For most Jews, therefore, Judaism is becoming a spiritual/religious community of choice rather than an ethnic community defined by birth. We have no precedents in the last two thousand years for how to shape such a Judaism.

The Jewish people has, however, done this at least once before—under similar conditions, when Hellenism (like modernity today) broke down the boundaries between other communities and our own about two thousand years ago. The result was not only a period of high rates of conversions, semi-conversions, and intermarriages, but indeed the very remaking of what Judaism was. What had been the biblical pattern of sacrifices brought to a single place to celebrate life in a single land became a pattern of prayer and Torah-study and midrash-writing for a people scattered across Europe and the Middle East.

Of course it is not automatic that Jews today can do what the rabbinic Jewish communities did two thousand years ago—create a new, life-giving form of Judaism that is itself organically rooted in its forebears. The issue is: *How* can those groups and institutions that have already begun shaping a new Jewish way of life take the next steps? How can they respond to the crises that are still emerging from an overreaching modernity? How can the new organs of Jewish culture help people deal more creatively with massive social breakdown?

First, how do those who have digested modernity create communities? Bershtel and Graubard are convinced that it cannot be done because those who undertake this project are hopelessly infected with modernity's self-consciousness, self-doubt, and self itself—that is, the ability and desire to make individual choices. Bershtel and Graubard argue that this makes communities unbearably fragile. But if we take this analysis as a challenge rather than a prediction, can we imagine a community that is, first of all, grounded upon individual choices to belong; that is vital enough to attract individuals to join and stay; and that recognizes and celebrates individual differences in ways that strengthen rather than dissolve the community? If this can be done, it will not be through general prescriptions but specific solutions tailored to specific circumstances. For example: Can we envision encouraging the teenage bar or bat mitzvah, at the moment of becoming a sexual being, to choose and act upon his/her *own* way of understanding this, and to do so publicly, in the midst of Jews—choosing what elements of Torah to affirm and how to do so?

Can we develop an "eco-kosher" guide to purchasing, investing, and consuming that draws not on an absolutist legal code—this you must do, this you must not—but on understanding that the whole earth's environment is being threatened? Can this ethos affirm that whole communities need to address the environmental crisis, while also affirming the ways that individuals within a communal framework make effective choices to improve their local environments?

Can we develop a sexual ethic that is not rigid and legalistic, and institute it with *b'tei chesed* (counselors of loving concern) to advise community members on what might make loving sense in moments of emotional upheaval, rather than *b'tei din* (courts of strict judgment) to order them to follow rules?

Beyond these issues is an even larger and harder one: How do we define the boundaries of our community? In all premodern communities, connections between individuals within the community were affirmed but connections between different

communities were avoided. Within the biblical community, individuals affirmed their connections by letting the individual ownership of their fields fade away in the corners—where the poor of the community, and even foreigners, could gather food to eat. In more recent Jewish communities, the connections were affirmed by wearing fringes, *tzitzit,* on the corners of clothing. "I" faded away toward "your" beginning. Between communities, good fences made good neighbors. Within the community, good fringes made good neighbors.

But modernity has brought different communities into such close relationship with each other that the boundaries are no longer sharp and clear, but fuzzy. So is there a way for the new Judaism to make *tzitzit,* fringes, for the entire community, like the *tzitzit* on the ceremonial prayer shawl—not sharp lines of separation but soft and fading boundaries?

One concrete challenge to this approach is the emergence of Jewish studies professors in secular universities. Are they, so to speak, the *tzitzit* of the rabbinate—Jewish guides and teachers not just inside the community but also on its fringes, bringing knowledge *about* Judaism (if not Judaism itself) to semi-universalized Jews as well as semi-universalized Christians, Buddhists, secularists? How can the Jewish community affirm this new profession, and encourage it to treat knowledge as the spark of action and practice rather than as dry academia?

Another obvious arena for forging reconfigured boundaries in Judaism is the question of intermarriage. Today many Jews fear that widespread intermarriage endangers the very integrity of the Jewish community. But, given that intermarriage seems inevitable in the unfenced world that we have chosen, might we make this practice into a *new* aspect of a *new* version of Judaism? Could we draw upon the Jewish way of addressing universal human issues—the metaphor of the rainbow covenant between God and the children of Noah—to find symbols and metaphors for a strongly Jewish ceremony to commemorate intermarriage? Can we find religious meaning in a practice that is usually taken to be a threat to our religious community?

Such challenges ultimately *require* Judaism to transform itself. An ethnic community can survive by merely having children. For a spiritual/religious community to endure, however, it must not merely survive but vivify—give people a sense of new life. Only a Judaism that is open, unafraid to take risks, spiritually alive, and inclusive will continue to keep non-Orthodox Jews involved in Jewish life, while also attracting non-Jews into the Jewish community.

And this means Judaism and the Jewish people must have a purpose beyond themselves, much as they did when they met the challenges of Hellenism with the reinvention of Jewish tradition and the transformation that is encoded in the Talmud. Modernized Jews will not keep learning and teaching a culture merely for the sake of its past oppressions or its past glories. What purpose might the Jewish people choose for itself? Could, for example, the rich heritage of a pastoral-agricultural people dedicated to sustaining and replenishing the earth be drawn upon to reshape the Jewish people as an intergenerational movement to heal the wounded earth and sustain its future life?

To take on any such world-historical task, the movement for Jewish renewal would certainly have to be much stronger than it is now. It would have to deal with questions that it has only begun to approach: questions of training organizers, rearing children, rewriting prayer books, recruiting rabbis, raising money, reshaping political rallies into public prayer. It would have to invent new ways to heal those caught in environmental disasters, and to house those made homeless by economic depressions.

What is now most needed if we are to prove the pessimistic predictions of Bershtel and Graubard wrong? One symbolic and practical response is that Bershtel and Graubard could themselves come to see their own skepticism as a useful part of the great effort to reshape the Jewish people, keeping us self-critically honest. Rendered in a broader stroke, the answer could be that those who have already in actual deed been transforming and renewing their own specific parts of Jewish life begin to see themselves as part of a growing worldwide movement.

But to bring this sort of movement about, we may need to create a new kind of Jewish institution. Such an institution needs to forge international connections among the clusters and

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individuals who make up the current movement for Jewish renewal, without undermining their autonomy. We need to create institutional forms that allow Jewish tradition to be generating new ideas and practices as it actively seeks out the people who will learn them. We need to develop the kind of institution that can speak to three different kinds of people: those who have given up on the Judaism they knew; those in the older institutions who are hungry for something they do not know how to name; and non-Jews who are drawn to Jewish tradition. And finally—hardest of all—the institution needs to be independent of the mainstream structures, but not unfriendly to them.

Is all this possible? Those who say Kaddish over the dying bodies of the old forms of Jewish life may well be right. But only to mourn these old forms is like yearning westward after the sun has set, to see it where it was last—and to miss entirely its dawning in the east. □

BOOK REVIEW

Great American Flop

Robert Cohen

The Runaway Soul by Harold Brodkey. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, 835 pp.

Does anyone still talk about the Great American Novel? Do American novelists? After all, it hasn't been so many years since Norman Mailer, among others, was promising one—writing provocative advertisements for himself, tossing off "quick and expensive" dismissals of rivals like Updike and Bellow, and vaulting into the ring to lay claim to a literary title that presumably, in some apocryphal bygone age, once belonged to Papa Hemingway.

Then, in the sixties, the G.A.N. talk seemed to die down a bit. South America and Europe were emerging with some heavyweight contenders of their own. On the domestic front arose three literary developments—metafiction, minimalism, and the institutionalizing of creative writing programs—which worked, in part anyway, as ironic jabs into the very face of high-Maileresque ambition. What place was there, after all, at Frederick Barthelme's sunbelt pool, or Bobbie Ann Mason's country kitchen, for earnest, long-winded types who were out to be the new Proust or Mann?

Still, movements come and movements go, and writers keep writing. And now, in the perhaps-necessary chaos of the contemporary scene, a few grey lions (never lionesses?) rear their heads, sniff the air, and venture toward the unclaimed prize.

October brought Mailer himself, the CIA novel, the one we've (some of us) been waiting for, *Harlot's Ghost*—1300 pages and counting; full of JFK, Marilyn, buggery, all the old obsessions, played out on a large historical stage and filtered through a style of mystic Manicheanism and metaphorical engorgement that has long characterized this writer at his best and his worst. And the concomitant disappointment with the book itself, mixed with some exhilaration: The crown is still up for grabs.

Then, right on its heels, a second long-awaited, long-discussed, and long-in-every-other-way novel appears. This from another large and imperious talent, another Jewish Harvard alum, now in his sixties; another legendary advertiser for himself. I am talking about Harold Brodkey, of course, and *The Runaway Soul.* Here is the opening paragraph:

> I was slapped and hurried along in the private applause of birth—I think I remember this. Well, I imagine it anyway—the blind boy's rose-and-milk-and-gray-walled (and salty) aquarium, the aquarium overthrown, the uproar in the woman-barn ... the fantastic sloppiness of one's coming into existence, one's early election, one's senses in the radiant and raw stuff of howlingly sore and unexplained registry in the new everywhere, immensely unknown, disbelief and shakenness, the awful contamination of actual light. I think I remember the breath crouched in me and then leaping out yowlingly: this uncancellable sort of beginning.

Uncancellable indeed. The style sounds like Augie March–meets–William Blake: brilliantly intense, fitful, syntax-bending, overtly narcissistic (that "private applause"), overblown. It's an audacious dare, especially given that there are 800-odd pages of this stuff to go, but it's one we've come to expect from Harold Brodkey, whose career has been nothing if not audacious.

Brodkey's work, like Mailer's, has always shown extraordinary ambition and intelligence. His metaphoric gifts are prodigious. He writes with the ego-aggressiveness and the heightened analytical paranoia of the longtime New Yorker. His prose works as a brazen, in-your-face assault, willing to risk foolishness on its way to a very particular kind of truth. And like Mailer, Brodkey is at his best when exploring the metaphysical intricacies of physicality, the urgent music of the body. Not to put too fine a point on it, he writes about sex a lot, and in a ferociously intellectualized way. "My body has a mindly quality," says the book's narrator, Wiley Silenowicz.

Wiley has been Brodkey's alter-ego for some years, appearing throughout the seventies and eighties in a series of remarkable stories, excerpts from a

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Robert Cohen is author of the novel The Organ Builder *(HarperCollins, 1988).*

long, autobiographical, Proustian novel that, though listed in publishers' catalogues, never appeared. These stories caused great excitement in some circles: the sense of something very large and original just beyond reach. Brodkey's novel-in-progress (then called *A Party of Animals)* touched, in our ironic literary age, a kind of latent romanticism—or it would have, if the book had ever appeared. But it didn't. This strange game of withholding, this absence-as-presence, seemed to feed the fires of anticipation. It was, in a way, the height of cool. Let the youngsters publish their small books, enjoy their small fame: Brodkey would remain aloof.

When the stories were collected a few years ago, as *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode,* some critics viewed this as a surrender, a concession that the long-promised novel had failed. Indeed, with the massive new book in hand, I'm not sure they were wrong.

The Runaway Soul is a coming-to-consciousness novel, the story of Wiley from his birth in St. Louis, through the perils of his childhood with his adopted family, and his attempt, in looking back years later (as a mature and somewhat notorious writer) to take the moral and psychological measure of himself through the memories of that childhood.

"I am an orphan who joined a circus but most of the people in the circus are ghosts—are ideas." The primary ghosts are his family: his adoptive mother, Lila, her husband, S.L., and their daughter, Nonie. The novel circles restlessly around their interactions. "I was shaped," Wiley observes, "in the weeks and months when nobody answered my cries." Small wonder: Lila is a shrewd, tough-minded, sometimes withholding woman, who has to cope with the loss of two infants (in Nonie's care, under mysterious circumstances), her difficult daughter, her husband's desertion and subsequent illness and death, and then her own illness (she dies of cancer soon afterward). Among her last words to Wiley, now home from Harvard, are instruction on the art of reality: "People aren't mirages—if you don't like real people, you wind up with no one."

The thrust of the novel is Wiley's effort to engage with this challenge on every level, to grasp it fully through memory and language. He has a long way to go. His parentlessness, like his Jewishness, seems to be a badge of alienation, a license for his formidably brainy Otherness. The prose gropes, as he does, for intimacy, the truth of other people and himself. But what truth is possible? Wiley's stance is a kind of romantic antiromanticism—which might account for the prevalence of paradox in his voice. Often it feels hopeless even to him. "Let me say something," he pleads with himself, "let me feel something, utterly and singly and simply true ... free of time, let me love simply.... "

"Someone phallically vain," Wiley tells us, "may be disgusting—or interesting." Or not.

He does seem to love S.L. simply, if no one else. S.L. is a shade less complicated than Lila. He is trickily affectionate and even, through his many waving screens of irony, touching. "Life's a struggle and I'm a quitter, Poopchick, how about that? How about a kiss?"

Both parents seem to spend a lot of time flirting with Wiley. *Everyone* in the novel spends a lot of time flirting with Wiley: his homosexual cousins Daniel and Ben, Nonie and her friend Leonie, his Uncle Abe, his friend Remsen, assorted others. Of course, Wiley spends a lot of time flirting with Wiley. "Masturbation," he reports, "is nutty with idealism, with hallucinations, with self-induced finalities." It's also kind of fun, no? But one can see how for a boy like Wiley—watchful, sensitive, struggling to impose an order on his emotions amid all the disorder of his life—masturbatory inversion, a life of idealized hallucinations (a writer's life, in short) is almost inevitable. At the same time, one grows as weary of his oft-mentioned sexual attractiveness as of its analogue, his oft-referred-to genius. "Someone phallically vain," he tells us, "may be disgusting—or interesting." Or not.

Despite all this, the magnetic center of the novel is Nonie, or rather the *idea* of Nonie. Beautiful, willful, reckless, at times she seems like a "normal" unhappy teenage girl and at others, as in a lightning storm thrillingly

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rendered at the end of the book, she seems to teeter on the edge of madness. Eventually she leaves home, marries, raises sons, and dies in a house fire, drunk. Throughout his life, Wiley remains obsessed with her. His circling memories have the effect of action painting, as if he's flinging words at a moving target, "intent on erasing her wildness." Perhaps this is because Nonie is the mirror of Wiley's own darkness and unfathomability. It's difficult to know, since the mirror is a distorted one—he's never sure whether she is fundamentally someone very like himself, or very other. "We are not guilty all the time of everything and neither was she," he writes. "People are good or half good or a quarter good and it changes all the time. The addition can come to a different total *all* the time."

There is a sense of poignant futility to Wiley's project, which extends to Brodkey's as well. "It is a game like hopscotch," he says of masturbation, "to catch bits of sensation in memory and to advance in knowledge of the sensations while backing off from them." But then what kind of advance is possible? The book is full of frustration with the powerlessness of language and the flimsiness of memory in the face of reality. "How do you set the value of a moment? In a story or in life?"

Yet one wonders whether it's language and memory that are the problem, or only Brodkey's approach. His Proustian method is to capture memory-in-consciousness in a uniquely honest, and at the same time heightened and abstract, way. He wants to seize moments in lived time and turn them upside down, inside out, shaking them until the change falls out of their pockets and their noses begin to bleed and they finally cough up some form of ultimate reality or truth. But certainly in Proust, the belligerence and frustration are nowhere near this high. Nor do Proust's various reminiscences have the oddly random feel of, to take one example, Wiley's minutely rendered 120-page foreplay with his sister's friend Leonie.

What went wrong? Perhaps it's a matter of too much time having passed; perhaps novels just aren't *supposed* to take twenty-seven years to write. One gets the feeling that over the decades the writing has stiffened somewhat, become clotted, static, fixed in its own mannerisms. As in:

> One keeps one's nerve and begins to practice the various, very odd, very hurtful disciplines of the unbearably complicated thing of the rumored or momentarily granted responsibility of the possession of a not entirely androgynous, no-longer-childhood ability to arouse, or be the cause of, feeling: it is a kind of *beauty*.

After a while, prose like this reads, as Wiley observes of his own inner speech, "like an intense and compressed jumble, really . . . a jumbled lunatic *Allness,* echo-y, knotted, private, *snotty.* It is like I'm talking in a hot, closed closet. . . ." Later, he admits, "No one can bear the way I talk." I suspect few readers will disagree.

Then too, the structure is problematic, at once fussy and slack. Characters and incidents we remember from the stories are in evidence here, but in slightly different form. For instance, Orra Perkins, from the splendid story "Innocence," appears for another protracted (about 100-page) bout of lovemaking, but the striking and hypnotic prose of the mid-1970s has congealed into something kvetchy, arrhythmic, prosaic:

> "Goddamn you! You son of a bitch! I LOVE YOU!" said the strong-muscled, superbly supple, healthy *bitch* in her disorder THUMPING onto the rug—but well within the tones and echoes of *anecdote* . . . of daydream—as we fucked on. But also at the edge suddenly—of feeling things *now*—of a different order of deep, even profound readiness as for getting pregnant or as for being hit and hated and, then, for her and my dying in all or in part (as young people of a certain sort)—for having the power to tempt, to allure, to upset, upend, and to arouse, and no real conviction, for twenty years so far, of being *deeply* attached to safety—or perhaps never. . . .

Whatever else can be said about this passage, it seems a falling-off. "Innocence" was a beauty, a stunning wake-up call to the possibilities of sex-in-language. It took the subject of Mailer's "The Time of Her Time" (a cool beauty being "given" her first orgasm), and pushed it even further, by means of a dazzling metaphoric velocity, working out a similar point of view: a kind of hot-cold, willful, analytical haughtiness that captures the sense of a battle (bullfight?) being joined or dominated. In the novel's version, however, much of the urgency has been lost (after all, she has already *had* her first orgasm), and because the whole section seems lacking in context—it's our only glimpse of Wiley in his twenties—only the humorless hyperbole remains.

Still, some of this book *is* moving, wonderfully so; the portraits of Lila and S.L. have an almost painful vividness and depth of feeling—one reads them and feels wracked by Wiley's own turbulence. But the brilliant flashes don't gather momentum as the novel progresses, and the voice is so relentless and overworked that there's no way for us to get *in*. It's a perversely private performance.

I assume the book's unreadability is somehow intentional. Much of the prose suggests we are in some other medium where the usual distinctions between good writing and bad writing no longer apply (even the title has

become baggier, windier, over the years). Possibly, at this point of engagement in the project, Brodkey is resigned to not-quite-getting it, to somehow falling short, as in:

> The time-inflected distances were logical in this part of the world but the specklings in the shadows were as if shadow could not bear to be shadow which was not logical. In half-okayness, one risks a kind of formality of self—one is logical among the logics of the sunlit and time-inflected distances.... This is very tiring.

Yes, it is. I wonder if, after three decades of working over this material, Brodkey's investment is now entirely in the process itself, rather than in this or any other product of it. Which may account for the feeling at the end of the book, a kind of momentary pause from which the story could easily continue, or not. Does this mean there will be a sequel, as Mailer has promised for *Harlot's Ghost?* Perhaps it's a grim thought, but I'd like to hold onto it anyway. I'd like to think that, after all these years, Brodkey has no choice but to keep going; that there are levels of absorption in fiction—and experience—that have a life and an ambition of their own, which no amount of criticism can blunt. That the point is not to have written a Great American Novel, but to be forever trying to write it. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Rise of Sidney Hillman

Melvyn Dubofsky

Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor by Steven Fraser. The Free Press, 1991, 688 pp.

Two of the three greatest leaders of labor in the United States were Jewish immigrants. Samuel Gompers, a child of Dutch-Jewish lineage, built the first stable national union center in the United States among the skilled craftsmen whose organizations dominated the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Yet Gompers's AFL, partly through choice and partly through neglect, never organized the vast majority of American wage-earners who were common laborers or machine operators. Sidney Hillman devoted his life to organizing precisely the workers abandoned by the AFL: first in the men's clothing industry through the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) (given outlaw status by Gompers); and then, together with John L. Lewis (the third man in labor's triumvirate), within the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

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Hillman's public life, as told in Steven Fraser's luminous prose, was an immigrant success story. Like Abraham Cahan's David Levinsky, who spurned education to earn riches as a garment manufacturer yet regretted that choice the wealthier he grew, Fraser's Hillman rejected both religion and revolutionary socialism in order to become a labor leader devoted to reconciling labor and capital. The more he consorted with prominent welfare capitalists, eminent social scientists, and powerful politicians, the more he evolved from a labor leader into a labor statesman. Progressive reformers and enlightened businessmen taught Hillman that a welfare state could benefit workers as well as and more readily than socialism.

Born in 1887 in Zagare, Lithuania (then part of the Russian Empire) to a prominent local family of merchants and rabbis, Hillman was destined to carry on the family tradition of religious teaching. Ill-suited to manual labor, which required a dexterity he lacked, Hillman preferred to read, a trait that prompted his parents to send him to the provincial capital of Kovno to become a typical "yeshiva *bucher.*" Transported from shtetl to city, however, he, like many young Jews raised in Orthodox homes, embraced the secular ideas then sweeping across the Czar's domain. For so many in his generation of Jews, individual emancipation from outmoded traditions and the creation of a more just modern order could come only by discarding the Talmud for the tract, the Messiah for Marx, and studying for agitating.

By 1903, he had joined the Bund, the Jewish adjunct to the Russian and Polish Social Democratic parties. Hillman, now a Menshevik, participated in the 1905 Russian Revolution and earned a term in prison. As fierce reaction set in, Hillman joined other Russian-Jewish revolutionaries who escaped to the West. He arrived in the U.S. in August 1907.

Hillman had become what Fraser calls a "half intellectual," one whose formal education had been interrupted by revolutionary agitation: "pragmatic in disposition and organizationally creative, but without the vulgar hostility to ideas and worship of the narrowly practical typical of American-style trade union careerists." Unlike his fellow immigrants, however, most of whom remained Jewish in culture and commitment,

Hillman had become the complete cosmopolitan, a man who dedicated himself to workers qua workers. No longer the shtetl provincial, Hillman was poised to enlist in the American world of progressive reform.

Despite his lack of any clear aptitude for manual labor, Hillman became an apprentice cutter for Hart, Schaffner, and Marx in Chicago, one of the largest manufacturers of men's clothing. His timing could not have been better. In 1910, the year Hillman began his apprenticeship, HSM's workers began a massive, protracted strike, which started Hillman's career as an American labor leader. The HSM strike also introduced him to such reformers as Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr of Hull House; Margaret Dreier of the Women's Trade Union League; Clarence Darrow, the famous "attorney for the damned"; and businessmen eager to install a more cooperative order in industry. Harold Ickes later remembered that the partners at HSM "invariably singled out for praise one young man, slight in stature and with gleaming black eyes from which flashed intellectual integrity, indomitable courage, and irresistible idealism. He was, we were told, wise beyond his years and a man destined to be a leader among men."

The prophecy was soon fulfilled. By 1915, Hillman had become a garment union official in New York City. When rebellious workers in the men's clothing industry founded the new ACWA, they turned to Hillman, the most widely known and admired figure among the insurgent immigrant unionists, to serve as union president. He would keep the position for the rest of his life. During World War I, Hillman moved directly into the vortex of national politics when he represented his union in its dealings with the federal government. Using his contacts with reformers, many of whom had prominent roles in the Wilson administration, Hillman made the ACWA the third largest union in the country. Wartime experiences reinforced the lessons Hillman had first learned from progressive reformers in Chicago, that in a liberal democracy the state could be used to benefit the masses, that a socialist revolution was not only unnecessary but could be counterproductive. Hillman's service in Washington hastened his conversion from Marxian socialism to social democracy and served as indispensable training for his future as a New Dealer.

During the 1920s, a decade identified with capitalist hegemony and consumer excesses, Hillman's union became the prototype of the "new unionism" with a social conscience. The ACWA, operating in a highly seasonal industry, pioneered unemployment insurance for its members; it provided union-subsidized health care; it built affordable and comfortable cooperative housing; it established labor banks that dealt in low-cost mortgage and consumer loans;and it offered a wide variety of cultural and educational programs. It was, according to Fraser, a "welfare state" in one union.

Those accomplishments also made Hillman a national reputation. Despite his foreign birth and heavily accented English, Hillman had become the favorite labor leader of middle-class reformers in the spheres of social work, academia, and enlightened management. He ran the only left-wing union that survived the doldrums of the prosperity decade; he dealt effectively with Communists while never ceding them influence in his union; and he kept the union largely free from the criminal activities then so common in the more competitive branches of the garment industry.

Thus, Hillman was well placed to seize the moment when Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power in 1933. Throughout FDR's reign, Hillman was never far from the center of national politics. No labor leader was more in tune with what Fraser calls the Keynesian elite of the New Deal or more convinced that the future of the labor movement depended upon an alliance with liberal politicians and the state. Together with John L. Lewis, Hillman brought unionism to first- and second-generation immigrant workers in the mass-production industries, an accomplishment he hoped would turn the Democrats into the American equivalent of a European social-democratic or labor party.

In the last years of World War II, this desire led Hillman to create the CIO's Political Action Committee. Conservatives from both major parties criticized Hillman as the power behind the Democratic throne, alleging that, in 1944, Roosevelt had to "clear" his vice-presidential nominee "with Sidney." Hillman seemed dangerous not only because he represented labor but also because he truly believed that, in the postwar world, Soviet-U.S. cooperation might create a global New Deal, inaugurating the century of the common man rather than the American Century. He died in 1946 (at the age of fifty-nine) before seeing the wreck of his dream.

Fraser's magnificent biography restores Hillman to his rightful place in history. Anticommunism long denied Hillman a position in the pantheon of trade unionism alongside Gompers and Lewis. By the 1950s, in what remained of the Jewish-American labor movement, David Dubinsky of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) personified a unionism that Hillman had done far more to build. Dubinsky's premature anticommunism made him a prophet, and his labor Zionism made him a spokesman for the post–World War II generation of Jewish-Americans. By contrast, Hillman's commitment to postwar collaboration with the Soviets and his allegiance to working-class universalism instead of Zionism left him a man without honor in his adopted land and a Jew largely forgotten among his own people. In almost 700 pages of profusely documented and annotated prose, Fraser reminds us how much of our contemporary heritage as Americans and as Jews has been the gift of Sidney Hillman.

In fact, no two men did more to create the society we inhabit today than Gompers and Hillman. Moreover, they led astonishingly similar lives. Not until I read Fraser's biography did I realize the parallels. Between them, Gompers and Hillman brought trade unionism and collective bargaining to the great mass of white, male workers; they tied the labor movement to the Democratic party of Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson; they were key builders of the American administrative state that began with regulatory agencies of the Progressive era and reached maturity during the eras of the New Deal, Fair Deal, and Great Society. And they promoted the policies that made workers participants in the blessings and curses of a mass consumer society.

There are revealing correspondences of a personal nature as well. Both men subordinated private life to serve the public cause—which is why Fraser says little about Hillman's

relationship with his wife, daughters, or close friends. Hillman shared the sentiment Gompers expressed when the latter wrote, "I am not unmindful of the duties one owes to his family ... but there is also a duty which one owes to his fellow workmen and his fellow men." Both men began their public careers as students of Marxism and advocates of class struggle and ended them as practitioners of class collaboration and salvagers of capitalism. Both men also rejected a provincial identification as Jews in favor of careers as cosmopolitan citizens of the U.S. and the world. Gompers told Jewish-American workers during World War I that "our" labor movement was not a "Hebrew Movement" or a "Heathen Movement" but an American one. Yet Gompers and Hillman moved throughout their lives in a movement and a national state saturated with anti-Semitism, knowing their failures would be ascribed to their religion and brethren.

However, the two leaders were shaped differently by the circumstances of their lives and the movements they led. Gompers came of age when only the most skilled workers could build unions strong enough to withstand a hostile state. Hence Gompers discarded the socialism of his youth for a "pure and simple" unionism and suspicion of state intervention in labor's realm. Hillman, by contrast, began his labor career when less skilled immigrant workers were creating unions and progressive reformers believed the state should foster industrial democracy. He learned before World War I that a positive liberal state could further the interests of organized labor.

Both men have also been accused by their biographers (Bernard Mandel in Gompers's case) of having enjoyed their greatest accomplishments only by renouncing youthful dreams of a cooperative commonwealth. More likely, Gompers and Hillman came to believe sincerely in a different, nonsocialist vision of the good society, which they expressed in similar ways. In Gompers's words,

> We want more school houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright.

And for Hillman,

> We want a better America, an America that will give its citizens ... a higher and higher standard of living so that no child will cry for food in the midst of plenty. We want to have an America where the inventions of science will be at the disposal of every American family, not merely for the few who can afford them. An America that will have no sense of insecurity and which will make it possible for all groups ... to live in friendship, to be real neighbors.

By and large, Gompers and Hillman made such dreams come true for the workers they organized and their children and grandchildren (especially for the Jewish-Americans among them). But today the world they built seems to be disappearing before our eyes. Millions of Americans lack the simple amenities of life and the personal security Gompers and Hillman sought to extend to all citizens. Today the dispossessed are largely nonwhite, female, and only rarely Jewish-American. Now it is their time to produce their own Hillmans and for the latter's descendants, like the reformers and New Dealers of old, to midwife the birth of new social movements. □

BOOK REVIEW

Strength of Character

Stuart Klawans

Reading the Book: Making the Bible a Timeless Text by Burton L. Visotzky. Anchor Books, 1991, 240 pp.

Tradition obliges me to study the Law, but it does not decree what I'm to find there. So, left to my own devices and novelistic bent, I read the Talmud for the sake of its characters.

Here is one of my favorites, Rabina, glimpsed during a discussion of the decorum of prayer. At what point, the Talmud asks, may we interrupt the Hallel to greet someone out of respect?

> Rabbah said: On the days on which the individual says the complete Hallel, he may interrupt between one section and another but not in the middle of a section; on the days on which the individual does not say the complete Hallel he may interrupt even in the middle of a section. But that is not so. For surely Rab b. Shaba once happened to visit Rabina on one of the days on which the individual does not say the complete Hallel and he [Rabina] did not break off to greet him? —It is different with Rab b. Shaba, because Rabina had no great respect for him.

Apart from giving us a sketch of antique high-handedness, this digressive little story teaches two lessons. First, we learn that the tendency of students to gossip about faculty is not an exclusively modern phenomenon. Second, we may see that the people who

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formulated classical Judaism did not merely tolerate the play of personality within rabbinic debate—they all but mandated it.

For centuries, by their custom of reading from the talmudic tract *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) each Saturday, Jews have given themselves a weekly reminder that the Law was passed on by people with specific names: Antigonos of Socho, Yose b. Yoezer of Sereda, Yose b. Yohanan of Jerusalem. Some of these people, such as Hillel and Shammai, emerge in rabbinic literature as well-rounded characters. Of others, such as Shemaiah, we know very little, although the hints are tantalizing. ("Love work," Shemaiah advised. "Hate authority. Don't get friendly with the government.") But however much or little we know about these figures, however august they may be in the pious mind, we are told again and again that they were humans, like ourselves, who clearly put their own stamp on tradition in the act of transmitting it. The freedom they allowed themselves, and the benefits of following their example, are the themes of Burton L. Visotzky's *Reading the Book*.

Visotzky shows himself to be an enemy of fundamentalist reading who delights in finding the most revered of authorities engaged in the most audacious flights of fancy.

The book Visotzky has in mind is the Bible—more particularly the Torah, and especially Genesis. The sort of reading he expounds upon and advocates is midrash—literally "searching out." This amazingly rambunctious approach to homiletic interpretation flourished from roughly 70 C.E. (the destruction of the second Temple) to about 1000 C.E. and was common to both the rabbis and the fathers of the church. Although Visotzky, a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, ventures briefly into Christian midrash, he concentrates here on the original, Jewish variety. Tacitly, he imposes two other limits on his subject. He dwells on moralizing and storytelling interpretations rather than the legalistic kind; and he passes over folkloric texts in favor of those that may be attributed to specific rabbis. You can't find personalities behind folklore—and as Visotzky argues, "For the interpretation of Scripture to be revelatory, we must reveal ourselves, too."

What does Visotzky reveal of himself in *Reading the Book*? First, he shows himself to be an enemy of fundamentalist reading, who delights in finding the most revered of authorities engaged in the most audacious flights of fancy. In one characteristic passage, he notes how the rabbis marveled at the self-control of Joseph, who in Gen. 39:7 was able, though a vigorous lad of seventeen, to resist the enticements of Potiphar's wife. (Visotzky likes colloquial translations; in his rendering, Mrs. Potiphar's invitation comes out as "Lay me.") The Bible story reaches its climax on "the day [when] Joseph arrived home to do his work and there was no man of the household at home." Visotzky elucidates this passage by selecting a midrash from the compilation Genesis Rabbah:

> "To do his work" (Genesis 39:11). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman explains, Quite literally, he meant to do the work she had requested of him. "There was no man" (ibid.). When he was ready to respond, he found himself unmanned.

Combining ingenuity, humor, and the eye of a very close reader, Shmuel bar Nahman is the sort of interpreter Visotzky cherishes. In part, Visotzky has written *Reading the Book* to share his enthusiasm with a general audience. But the book also reveals a more anxious side of his character, which his lively geniality does not quite conceal. Although Visotzsky wants to believe that midrash might serve as inspiration for present-day readers of the Bible, he knows that the rabbis' worldview will appear congenial today only to the wrong party, the fundamentalists.

A quick summary of some midrashic strategies, along with their underlying assumptions, will illustrate the problem. As Visotzky shows, the rabbis permit multiple, even contradictory, interpretations of a text. This sounds like postmodernism but is not. The decidedly premodern assumption is that Scripture is inexhaustible because it is divine. Similarly, the rabbis often explain one text by quoting another, regardless of its purported authorship or date of composition; Scripture is a unified canon. The rabbis make free use of allegory in order to get a text to say what they think it should; Scripture in all cases is morally prescriptive.

We need not concern ourselves here with the more exotic strategies of reading, such as breaking words apart, or assigning numerical values to words, or basing serious arguments on bad puns. Though fun to learn about, these methods won't tempt many modern readers. But the desire to make *this* in the Torah mean *that* in our lives; the feeling that, as good democrats, we ought to welcome divergent readings; even the convention of reading Genesis, say, as a single book, rather than as a patchwork of texts—all of these tendencies still have a grip on the modern reader, though the old assumptions behind them do not. Visotzky himself outlines, and endorses, the theory that Torah was stitched together from disparate sources. He enjoys pointing out how the Torah's plain text makes revered figures—even Abraham—look morally slippery (for example, there is the little trick that Abraham makes Sarah turn in Genesis 12). As for whether a divine authority really lies behind the text, Visotzky keeps his opinion to himself. How then does he expect us to do backflips off a rabbinic high-dive, when it looks like there's no water in the pool?

Or, to rephrase the question: When modern readers of the Bible allow themselves interpretive freedom, are they relying on anything more than their own likes and dislikes, their tastes, their prejudices? Is a third way possible between fundamentalism and postmodernist free-for-all? Taking a leap of faith, Visotzky answers that many such middle ways might evolve—but only if people read Torah communally:

> It is only in the reading and the rereading which each community does together that the Bible becomes a timeless text, the Word of God. If and when that happens, the Bible ceases to be just another book, gathering dust on a shelf.... The give and take of interpretation creates an extra

voice in the room, the sound of Reading the Book.

A quasi-mystical utterance, granted; but Visotzky has a couple of thousand years of experience to back it up.

Rabbinic Judaism got its start in the wake of the Babylonian exile and the gradual spread of Jews throughout the Hellenistic world; it flourished only after the expulsion from Jerusalem. Unlike the Temple cult, with its caste system, this portable Judaism was designed to be carried by anybody—even a peasant like Akiba b. Yosef, even converts like some of his disciples. That's why the Talmud and the midrashic compilations are so full of names. Rabbinic Judaism is the product of a potentially infinite number of individuals. And yet according to the rabbis, these individuals will forever remain one people—provided they keep studying the Torah.

So far, it's worked. Is it really so quixotic to think that it might keep working, with the help of a little imagination? Modern Jews are already pretty good at asserting their personalities. All they have to do now is get together once in a while and conduct their self-expression over a Bible, and maybe new ways of reading Torah will evolve.

For those who want to try, Visotzky has written a friendly, compact guidebook full of jumping-off points for group discussions of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Moses' crazy family, and (going back to the beginning) Adam and Eve and the creation. Along the way, Visotzky also illustrates forty (count 'em) methods of midrash. Of course, these interpretations—especially the stories—might please even a lone reader sitting at home. But Visotzky, an experimentalist among his fellow rabbis, clearly will not be satisfied unless people take *Reading the Book* into the laboratory of group discussion. That's the third and perhaps most important facet of the personality he reveals: He wants to find out what happens next. □

BOOK REVIEW

A Marriage of Convenience

Rachel Biale

Rachel's Daughters: Newly Orthodox Jewish Women by Debra Renee Kaufman. Rutgers University Press, 1991, 234 pp.

The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism by Tamar Frankiel. Harper San Francisco, 1991, 140 pp.

For more than twenty years a Jewish form of feminism has been seeking to challenge and transform the Jewish tradition as a whole and Orthodoxy in particular. Yet in spite of these efforts, the metaphorical marriage between feminism and Judaism is still far from the feminist ideal of an egalitarian relationship.

These two books, by and about Orthodox women, serve as striking —albeit often unwitting—testimony to the uneasy state of Jewish-feminist relations. *Rachel's Daughters* is an anthropological study of women who have become Orthodox *(ba'alot teshuvah)*, while Frankiel gives a firsthand account of her own journey to Orthodoxy and the theology that goes along with it. Both studies show that newly Orthodox women come to Judaism seeking a haven from the discontents of modernity and, specifically, an answer to the challenges feminism poses to conventional gender roles, sexuality, and the nature of female identity. Kaufman's interview subjects use many elements of the feminist critique of contemporary culture to justify their turn to Orthodoxy. By Kaufman's account, these women see Orthodoxy as "'feminine in principle,' correlating that which is associated with the female in Orthodoxy ('the so-called feminine virtues of nurturance, mutuality, family and motherhood') with the spiritual and sacred meaning of life." Paradoxically, while these women present their choice of Orthodoxy as a rejection of contemporary feminist values, they use feminist categories and vocabulary to explain and glorify the traditional world they have adopted. Some of Kaufman's subjects self-consciously appropriate feminist thinking while others are unaware of how much their concepts and language are formed by feminism. In either case, they co-opt and use feminist ideas that dovetail with Jewish values but ignore the aspects of feminism that challenge traditional structures.

Frankiel seeks to bring about a more sustained fusion of feminist ideology and Orthodoxy. Yet the synthesis she achieves is more apparent than real: It co-opts feminist language and feminist sensibilities to support a thoroughly traditional view of Jewish values and practice. In this metaphorical marriage, Orthodoxy takes the role of the traditional, patriarchal husband, subsuming the feminist "wife."

Not surprisingly, the results of this union do not make for an intellectually honest encounter. In defending traditional practices, for example, Frankiel tries to stretch the contemporary feminist celebration of women's differences to a point beyond recognition. Women's exclusion from public ritual life, study of Torah, and certain legal obligations (mitzvot) is justified, she argues, since "women are spiritually superior to men": They do not need the structure of certain mitzvot, public prayer, and routine study of the law that men need in order to reach the

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same religious status and spiritual state. This argument for female superiority, like many other works on female spirituality and psychology, shows that competitiveness and triumphalism are not, as feminists often claim, exclusively male vices, but afflict women as well in Frankiel's brand of feminism. In Frankiel's work, this claim of spiritual superiority for women is little more than a female version of well-known male Orthodox apologetics.

Frankiel and the women Kaufman interviewed portray Orthodoxy as a conflict-free resolution of the problems of the contemporary world. They depict an inner life, both in the psychological and theological-spiritual realms, that is free of doubts and ambivalence. But embracing Orthodoxy as a panacea for modernity requires, it seems to me, an extraordinary measure of denial, and is likely to result in a flat, impoverished life of the mind and the psyche.

Using Orthodoxy as an escape from modernity's conflict and ambivalence does more than gloss over the real contradictions between Judaism and feminism; it also distorts Jewish tradition, a tradition that is defined by its ready affirmation of conflict rather than easy resolutions. Sources like the Talmud are renowned for presenting the law (or Halacha) in the form of argument and disputation. The preservation of minority opinions and the frequent reevaluation of how earlier authorities arrived at their conclusions are the hallmarks of halachic literature.

But this is not merely a matter of form. Halachic tradition is an ongoing, practical implementation of the view that life is saturated with conflicts. By "conflicts" I do not mean simply differences of opinion, but fundamental human dilemmas, often rendered in the language of theology, psychology, or politics—or in the case of Jewish tradition, legal disputation. Any solutions presented in this framework are temporary and time-bound, and tacitly acknowledge that fundamental human problems and conflicts arise anew in every generation.

To be sure, the legal tradition *does* strive for decisions; Judaism is a prescriptive religion. But the requirement of prescription is always in tension with the tendency to argue and dispute. And this state of tension is itself the most compelling illustration that the tradition is based essentially on conflict. One can thus reject the prescriptive authority of the tradition, holding oneself unbound by mitzvot, and still remain within the dialectic of the tradition. For this position, it is the conflicts, rather than the halachic solutions, that form a body of sources that are continually relevant and meaningful.

Embracing Orthodoxy as a panacea for modernity requires an extraordinary measure of denial.

Let me give an example of what I have in mind. The laws of *onah* and *niddah* regulate the frequency of sexual relations between husbands and wives. The first prescribes how often a man must initiate sex in order to assure his wife sexual satisfaction; the second proscribes sex during and after the menstrual period. One can argue, as Frankiel does, that these laws provide an Orthodox solution to the "feminist" problem of women's sexual rights by affirming female pleasure, giving women control of their bodies, and, through abstinence, creating space and time in a marriage for nonsexual intimacy. But if one does not accept these laws as prescriptive, one can find something else in the halachic discussion: a recognition of the fundamental *conflicts* in male-female relations. Male and female sexual needs and rhythms often seem mismatched, whether due to biological or cultural factors, or some combination of the two. Sexual intimacy is at once compelling and frightening because it implies the loss of boundaries and merging oneself with another. Every sexual relationship oscillates between arousal, desire, and distancing, between the excitement of falling in love and the maintenance of love in a long-term relationship. Sexual arousal seems in all cultures at least partially bound with breaking taboos, violating boundaries and tensions between the genders. Thus I suspect that maintaining erotic passion in relationships that strive to be thoroughly egalitarian and nonaggressive may be much harder than we would like to admit.

The talmudic discussions of *onah* address another fundamental conflict: familial and sexual obligations versus the study of Torah. In the Talmud, of course, this is an exclusively male conflict, but in its modern guise, it is central to both male and female identity, whether formulated as the dilemma of family versus career, or, in Freudian terms, as eros versus civilization (id versus superego). The Talmud institutes the very terms of this conflict for men by spelling out how Torah study is to be balanced with the sexual obligations of *onah* and making the frequency of *onah* contingent on a man's profession.

What is most interesting in these discussions is not the specific laws themselves, but the tensions between the laws and the rabbinic stories in which they are embedded: the tensions, in other words, between Halacha (law) and Aggada (legend). As Daniel Boyarin has pointed out in analyzing the passages in the Babylonian Talmud dealing with *onah,* the rabbis themselves were highly conflicted over how to resolve the imperatives of sex and study. Instead of simply legislating when men must have sexual relations with their wives, as contemporary Orthodox treatments of *onah* (including Frankiel's) usually imply, the actual talmudic text reveals much greater struggle. The Mishna presents a seemingly straightforward law, but the Gemara repeatedly contests it with stories of rabbis who acted differently by going away to study for long periods and ignoring their wives. In modern terms, the Aggada reveals profound conflict between the contrary pulls of family and profession. This kind of reading allows those who do not accept Halacha to turn to the tradition as the record of human struggle rather than as a code of prescriptive laws.

The approach that I am advocating here is surely not the only possible or legitimate one. Yet it has an important virtue that the model presented by Frankiel and other *ba'alot teshuvah* lacks. For them, as for many other advocates of Orthodoxy, one must either accept or reject the tradition. Those who wish to remain secular have no choice, according to this view, but to abandon the tradition to the hegemony of those who call themselves Orthodox.

But this binary opposition bears poor witness to Jewish experience. As

long as we remain constrained by the choice of rejection versus acceptance of the prescriptive authority of the tradition, we miss our main task: to incorporate the greatest intellectual change affecting Jews in the modern era—secularism—into a dynamic definition of what it means to be Jewish. The conflictual model that characterizes the whole of Jewish tradition allows—and indeed requires—us to include *all* interpretations, including the secular, into our understanding of Judaism. This is the only model that allows for a dialogue between secular and religious Jews and between feminism and Orthodoxy.

In such a dialogue, participants frankly affirm contradictions and conflicts rather than sweeping them under the rug. Each side maintains its individual integrity, even as the very dialogue creates an ongoing relationship between them. Thus, rather than seeking to harmonize feminism with Jewish tradition, it is necessary to recognize where there are real contradictions between them. This recognition is the only basis for a truly egalitarian marriage between feminism and the Jewish tradition. And we can expect that, like all such unions, this one will leave neither partner unchanged. □

FILM REVIEW

The Liberal Picture Show

Deborah Kaufman

In an opening long shot that contains every orientalist cliché a Westerner could conjure, the camera pans over a rocky and overgrown West Bank landscape. From a distant minaret, a muezzin calls Muslims to prayer, and we see a *kaffiyeh*-clad Palestinian with a child, languorously riding a donkey down a winding road. Suddenly the tranquility is broken: A sputtering European automobile careens, driverless, over the horizon as two screaming Israelis in uniform race alongside it, struggling to regain control of their vehicle.

One of the two soldiers, Rapha (Sharon Alexander), is on his way to a military base in the Occupied Territories, where he has been sent to investigate the suspicious death of a Palestinian during interrogation. When Rapha unravels and exposes the murder of this Palestinian, he in turn becomes the victim of a bloody attack by his brothers-in-arms, who are trying to silence him.

The plot of *One of Us* is rooted in daily life in a militarized state. In Israel, repeated revelations of soldiers torturing and murdering their Arab prisoners powerfully dramatize the corrupting nature of occupation and conquest. But between the realpolitik acknowledgment that a victorious army naturally brutalizes its vanquished subjects and a deeply felt concern for the moral implications of this behavior lies a vast grey area of ambivalence. Israelis are expert at the denial of their own uncertainties and contradictions; *One of Us* dramatizes this by what's in the screenplay as well as what's left out. Not only the filmmakers but the characters they create are mired in the culture of occupation in a way that prevents them from creating a truly radical alternative or picture of transformation.

International organizations such as Amnesty International and partisan observers such as the U.S. State Department have documented routine human-rights abuses in Israel. These "incidents," as they are officially called, take on the proportions of scandals—more as symbolic rituals that cleanse the public conscience than as occasions for serious reform. Torture has become a permanent feature of the Israeli political landscape, from the Pinto Affair in the 1970s, in which an IDF lieutenant strangled four Lebanese prisoners during Operation Litani, to the Shamir-appointed Landau Commission report, which found that the Shin Bet had not only systematically tortured prisoners for seventeen years but lied to the military courts about its interrogation methods the entire time. The Landau Commission went so far as to condone "moderate physical pressure" in interrogations, even though it acknowledged that nearly half of all interrogations end without charges being pressed against the suspect.

Only in the summer of 1991 did an Israeli court first punish Israeli torturers with a prison sentence, when two Shin Bet investigators were convicted of "negligence" in the death of a twenty-seven-year-old Gaza man in 1989. Each soldier received a mere six months' imprisonment. The State of Israel now acknowledges that torture is a crime, but the punishment it metes out is slight; the message is overwhelmingly one of ambivalence.

In his article "Talking About Torture in Israel" (*Tikkun,* September/October 1991), Stanley Cohen describes the internally contradictory pattern of denial and justification among Israelis: "It can't be happening here, but if it is, it must be all right." And where justification doesn't work, there is the (faulty) assumption that with public exposure, the system will correct itself.

Denial and ambivalence are not limited only to the Occupation's excesses; they are also typical Israeli attitudes toward the very fact of the Occupation itself. Even the occasional visitor to Israel is struck by the way Israelis deny the existence of the stress and fear caused by the political situation. It is impossible to live outside of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, yet it seems easier to deny it in order to function day-to-day. To live fully with the conflict means not only giving voice to multiple perspectives

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—including that of the Palestinians—in the political sphere, but accepting a subjective multiplicity of perspectives—confronting one's own mixed feelings and contradictions.

In *One of Us,* the writer-director team Benny and Uri Barbash have created an Israeli passion play in which Rapha struggles to overcome this ambivalence. The findings of his investigation force him to choose whether to remain loyal to the army and state by participating in the cover-up, or to face the consequences of remaining true to his conscience by making his knowledge public.

After Rapha arrives at the base, a long flashback begins in a training camp, where a macho friendship develops between Rapha, Yotam (Alon Aboutboul), and Amir (Dan Toren). The soldiers share the usual rigors of group exercises and increasingly painful and humiliating endurance tests under the tutelage of a sadistic platoon commander. Rapha's ulcer begins to act up, but he also lets his sense of humor get him into trouble when he anonymously distributes a photo he has taken of the commander defecating outdoors.

In the spirit of the unit's anthem "All for one and one for all," Rapha's buddies refuse to let him turn himself in, and they accept a group punishment, doled out with savage vengeance by the commander. But their solidarity breaks under military discipline. Rapha watches as his friends Yotam and Amir argue over the value of group loyalty under their increasing physical hardships. One by one, Rapha's comrades slowly ostracize him; eventually an anonymous informer turns him in. When the commander punishes Rapha sadistically, he chooses to transfer out of the unit. Yotam, Rapha's closest buddy, cannot understand what has happened.

As the film shifts back to the present, we find that Yotam is now the head of the unit. Amir was recently killed, ostensibly by the Palestinian prisoner whose death Rapha has come to investigate. Rapha wants to disqualify himself from the investigation because of his personal ties to Amir and Yotam. But Yotam, despite protests from his men at the base, his commanding officer Colonel Karny (Arnon Zadok), and his girlfriend Tamar (Dahlia Shimko), convinces Rapha to stay on. Tamar, in a traditionally female, civilizing role, says to Yotam, "It's as if you owe Rapha an apology. You're waiting for him to approve of something you're not so sure about." Was Yotam the anonymous informer who turned Rapha in? Is Yotam "not so sure" of the moral implications of his actions on the base?

Rapha begins, "The deceased was shot." Colonel Karny interrupts, "You've promoted the terrorist to the rank of 'the deceased.' Next time you'll be saying 'of blessed memory.'" Rapha corrects himself: "The terrorist was shot."

Tension rises on the base when Rapha finds the tools of torture covered with fingerprints and hears about a "missing" tape cassette that had recorded the interrogation, torture, and killing. In a scene rife with repressed sexual tension, Yotam punches Rapha in the face, nurses his bloody wounds, and then tenderly holds him in his arms. Yotam reproaches him, with barely concealed guilt: "At least you'll shut your fucked-up mouth now." In a revealing response, Rapha answers, "It's not my mouth that's fucked up, it's my character."

Rapha is presumably speaking for all of Israel's doves who feel that by being in opposition they are "fucked up." They have internalized the venomous attacks of the Israeli Right, which equates criticism of the State with treason. In this nationalist worldview, doves are "wimps," just like diaspora Jews; neither has a right to challenge the status quo. Though doves in Israel have no political power, they carry all the guilt for the collective crimes of the State. At this point, Rapha is drinking Maalox by the quart to soothe the pain of his ulcer, but something far more serious is eating away at Israel's body politic. In fact, it is not Rapha who is "fucked up"; it is the character of Israeli society.

Rapha confronts Yotam with his discoveries and describes the torture and humiliation inflicted on Palestinians by Yotam and his men. Yotam responds with the story of how he held in his arms the dying Amir, a victim of Palestinian terror. "All for one and one for all" has become an ironic national anthem that now rings with desperation. The two grown-up men with guns scream and grasp at each other across a political abyss; neither has an answer the other can accept.

The report Rapha makes to Colonel Karny on the "incident" he has come to investigate points out the degree to which Rapha is no longer "one of us." Rapha begins, "The deceased was shot." Karny interrupts, "You've promoted the terrorist to the rank of 'the deceased.' Next time you'll be saying 'of blessed memory.'" "I'm sorry," says Rapha. Karny warns him, "Don't be sorry, be careful." Rapha corrects himself: "The terrorist was shot."

This regulation of language's implicit political imperatives sets the stage for the frightening climactic sequence in which men from the unit attack, beat, and poison Rapha in order to prevent him from speaking ever again. This was the final scene in the original stage play upon which the script is based; but the Barbash brothers have refused the kind of despair the original script allowed, and have added their own ending.

In the Barbash brothers' extended filmic rendition, Tamar rescues Rapha from death at the hands of his fellow soldiers and reveals the only evidence of torture, the "missing" cassette tape. It is the female, outside and marginal to the man's world, who is able to break the silence. While Yotam, Karny, and the other soldiers wait nervously in a brightly lit room, the camera cuts to Rapha, alone, framed by a window as he types the report at his desk in the dark of night.

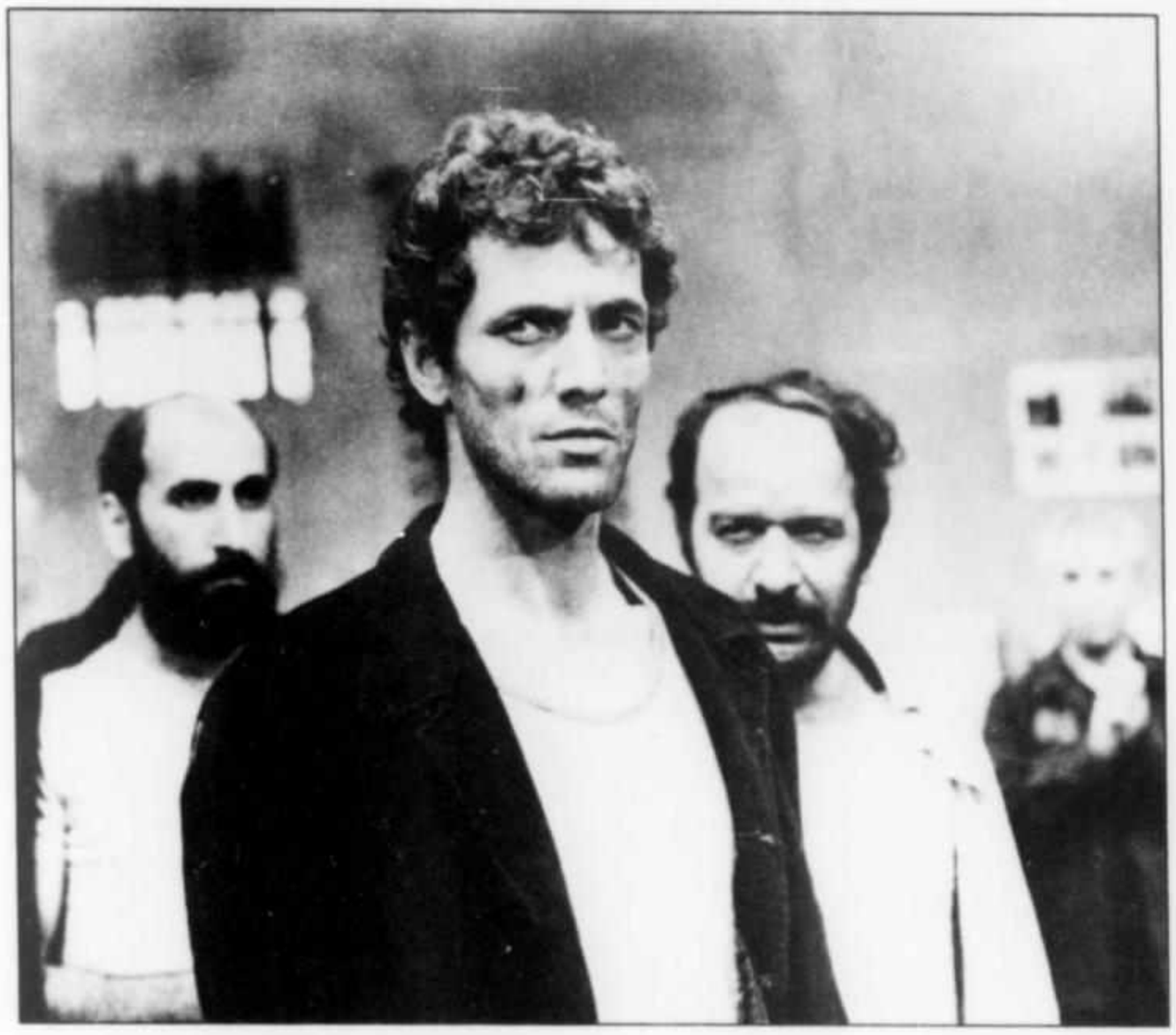
Rapha is carrying the incriminating report as he leaves the base early the next morning in the same sputtering European car, which now needs to be pushed in order to start. In an ambiguous denouement, he stops at a burning dumpster, stares across the flames at Tamar, who gazes back in recognition, and the two watch Yotam drive by alone in his military jeep. Fade to black. If Rapha has thrown his report in the flames, the film becomes an exposé of the corruption of the entire system and the impossibility of even an honest soldier escaping

contamination. If Rapha adopts the detached integrity of Tamar and indeed does submit his report to higher authorities, his act of individual courage may be laudable, but not terribly effective in changing political conditions in Israel. We will never know.

In the stage version, director Uri Barbash admits there was a bleak but decisive message: "Violence won't stop at the Green Line—if you can kill an Arab you can kill a Jew." There was no outside political pressure to soften the screen adaptation, Barbash says: "I meant the film version to be ambiguous. I don't want to do propaganda films."

The failure of the filmmakers to provide either a clear stand or a more effective resolution in many ways mirrors the limitations and failures of the Israeli peace camp. Screenwriter Benny Barbash, a lieutenant colonel who served in Lebanon, was particularly outspoken in his opposition to the war in which he fought. Uri Barbash has charged publicly that Israel is becoming another South Africa. Both are active supporters of Peace Now. But the Barbash brothers' overriding concern with the morality of Rapha's choice seems to avoid the more essential concern of territorial control and political power. In fact, *One of Us* never directly questions the policy of occupation or gives voice to alternatives. Instead, it internalizes resistance as individual acts of courage. Similarly, Peace Now is obsessed with maintaining respectability, and so does not challenge the structure or culture of occupation. At last October's Tel Aviv rally called by Peace Now to support the Middle East peace conference in Madrid, all of the supposedly oppositional speeches were in fact supportive of Shamir. The peace movement ensures its continued marginality by its inability to propose an alternative.

Ella Shohat, in her book *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (University of Texas Press, 1989), posits that the marginality and ambivalence of protagonists in contemporary Israeli cinema is "bohemian": "The identification with the marginal..., in contrast with that of many Third World films, does not represent a form of mediated solidarity with the oppressed but rather a pretext for narcissistic self-contemplation." Shohat asserts that this is to a great degree because the Western Ashkenazi Jews of Israel cannot and will not identify themselves as Middle Easterners; they instead retain orientalist, paternalistic, and aloof attitudes toward Jews of Middle Eastern origin and Arabs. The result is that Israel's cinema of occupation offers only an analysis of guilt rather than proposing a radical shift in power.



Prisoners of liberalism? Israeli filmmakers Benny and Uri Barbash offer a tentative vision of Palestinian-Israeli solidarity in Beyond the Walls.

Earlier collaborations of the Barbash brothers reveal the extent to which these tendencies haunt both Israeli narrative film and the political conditions that cinema reflects. Their two earlier screen collaborations, *Beyond the Walls* (1984) and *Unsettled Land* (1988), deal with some of the same issues raised by *One of Us:* the individual versus the group, moderates (doves or political leftists) versus extremists (the ideological right wing), and rebels versus authority.

When it was released, *Beyond the Walls* was the most controversial and popular film ever produced in Israel, and the first Israeli feature to deal directly with relations between Palestinians and Jews. In the film, Uri (Arnon Zadok), a stereotypically swarthy Sephardi Jewish criminal, teams up with Issam (Muhammed Bakri), a thoughtful Palestinian "terrorist," against the divide-and-conquer strategy of a corrupt and brutal prison administration. The solidarity of the Palestinian and Jewish inmates made a bold utopian statement. The film won almost every award in Israel as well as the International Critics Award at the prestigious Venice Film Festival, and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Film. It was the first film ever to be screened before the Knesset, and it provoked pickets, demonstrations, and ultimately riots between supporters of Rabbi Meir Kahane and peaceniks in Israel. Although Warner Brothers released *Beyond the Walls* in the U.S. as simply a genre film about rival prison gangs, the film was a major political event in Israel.

The story is told primarily through the point of view of Uri, whose leadership and integrity, like Rapha's, set him apart from the group. His realization that the authorities will go to any length to retain control of the prison (they arrange for the murder of a Jew and blame it on the Palestinians in order to keep the prisoners at each other's throats) moves him toward understanding that all inmates, regardless of ethnic identity or nationality, will

share the same grim fate unless they rise up together against their common enemy. Unlike *One of Us,* in which politics tears friends apart, politics brings enemies together in *Beyond the Walls.* Uri must choose whether or not to overcome his prejudices and forge an alliance with the men he had called his enemies. The outcome is a prison strike that reveals unexpected depths of compassion and understanding between men trapped in a situation beyond their control.

The rebels in *Beyond the Walls* have moral authority but they cannot and do not take power. The film is a critique of the establishment, but like *One of Us,* it never offers an alternative. Director Barbash admits that the ending is ambiguous, and has just finished shooting *Beyond the Walls II,* scheduled for release in late 1992, in which the same characters attempt an escape from the prison.

In *Unsettled Land,* the Barbash brothers produced another genre film, this time using the classic Western to represent Israel's frontier period. Anda (Kelly McGillis) and her pioneer comrades from Europe arrive to build a utopian society in Palestine circa 1920; the inevitable confrontation between the "cowboy" settlers and Palestinian "Indians" impels the film's narrative. Like Tamar in *One of Us,* Anda is the civilizing influence and love-object of the men whose male-bonding rituals include smashing boulders with their bare hands and brandishing newly acquired firearms. Zev (Ohad Shachar), the titular head of the settlers, is fanatically devoted to building the new State regardless of the consequences; Amnon (Arnon Zadok), on the other hand, the outsider and embodiment of humanism, is a Jew who speaks Arabic to his Palestinian friends in the surrounding villages. Anda's dreams of a just society are shattered as absolutists on both the Jewish and Palestinian sides encourage the violent destruction of the enemy.

Both *Unsettled Land* and *One of Us* are frontier films, set outside of civilization in that perilous zone where two cultures collide, where heroes are supposed to live by killing, and where the frontier man makes his own laws. But this version of the Wild West has a distinctively Middle Eastern twist. *Unsettled Land*'s main characters, Amnon and Muhammed (Amos Lavie), the village *mukhtar,* urge their compatriots to compromise, but cannot prevent the start of the range-war that serves as the film's climax. Neither side can transform itself from within, and both Amnon and Muhammed are sacrificed on the altar of extremism. Both Amnon and Muhammed are individual men of honor in an intractably corrupt situation. They sing a love song to each other in Arabic, to the accompaniment of a European settler's charred violin, before they ride off together into a hail of Jewish and Palestinian bullets. The death of the moderates is clearly an allegory for the failures of their successors, who continue to work toward dialogue in later generations. However, by presenting the film from Anda's point of view, the Barbash brothers have rendered all perspective through the eyes of an enlightened occupier, an ambivalent liberal. In so doing, the filmmakers have foreclosed the possibility of directly challenging the Occupation.

A radical cinema in Israel might begin to challenge the Occupation by providing multiple points of view. Such a cinema could attempt to challenge the denial and ambivalence so prevalent in Israeli society by validating the subjective contradictions that exist for people in the audience. In the Israeli context, an acceptance of diversity could, in fact, be the first decisive step toward an alternative to the status quo. It could provide a cultural context that would allow a filmmaker to create an unambiguous scenario and conclusion without feeling that he or she is simply a "propagandist." The Barbash brothers' work has done much to raise controversial issues and point accusatory fingers in righteous indignation. The first generation of Israeli filmmakers in the two decades after Israel's independence raised the banner of aliya, pioneer settlements, and the struggle against the enemy. The auteurist New Wave swept Israel much as it did Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, and a culture of existentialist individualism downplayed the ideals of the first generation. The Barbash brothers represent a generation of new talent that works against both these strains. They have used film to relate stories of conflict and change without reducing their characters into mere metaphors. But they have portrayed the Middle East as seen by an ambivalent liberal mind—a brutal, violent man's world full of prisons, hostile natives, and pathological military units. Through their films we see a culture of occupation that has no script for transformation. They present a challenge to the next generation of filmmakers and activists who have yet to imagine or create a truly radical alternative. □

PALESTINIANS

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Hundreds and thousands of Palestinians from the local villages, refugee camps, and slums of Hebron, Nablus, and Gaza felt that they too were going to Madrid and continuing on with the delegation to Washington to meet with the heads of state. This mixture of academics, former security prisoners, and supporters in the Palestinian "street" forged a broad consensus behind the peace process.

At the beginning of the peace negotiations the Palestinians' political proposals were rather vague. The delegation seemed to rely on the United States to do everything for them. Before the Palestinian representatives left for the first rounds of talks in Washington, Sari Nusseibeh, a lecturer in philosophy at Bir Zeit and the man considered to be Husseini's second-in-command in coordinating the activities of the delegation, said that he was very optimistic about the outcome of the peace talks. In an interview with the Jordanian newspaper *El Dustar,* Nusseibeh claimed that "the general outline of the peace agreement has already been worked out between the United States and Russia and it includes Israeli withdrawal and the fulfillment of our demands."

Other members of the delegation also said that they could not foresee any special problems that might arise between the Palestinians and the United States. Indeed, during the period between the peace talks in Madrid and their continuation in Washington, it seemed that the Palestinians were walking around with secret American promises in their pockets, assuring them that the Americans were on their side. Time and again they submitted complaints against Israel to the American consulate in Jerusalem and to American officials in Washington, as though these authorities represented some official body that handled Palestinian grievances. They demanded that the Americans act to stop Israel from expropriating Arab land and homes, as in East Jerusalem's Silwan neighborhood; they insisted that the Americans negotiate the release of Palestinian prisoners, ease Israeli censorship, force Israel to lift the curfew in Ramallah, secure greater freedom for political activity, and stop building roads to the Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

During the peace talks in Washington in January, Bernard Lewis, the noted Middle East expert, visited Jerusalem and met with several prominent Palestinians. "Look at what you are doing," he told them. "For decades, the Arabs, and the Palestinians among them, have fought for the ousting of the imperialist powers from the region. Now suddenly you and the Arab states are actually begging the Americans to intervene in the Middle East and solve your problems for you."

Sometimes, Palestinians even greeted renewed measures of Israeli repression with something like disdain, as though the impending demise of the Occupation would soon bring an end to such practices. For example, at the end of 1991, when the Israeli military governor extended the order to keep Bir Zeit University closed, the Palestinians did not protest, as they had in previous years. They were prepared to suffer the closure a while longer: They would be the authority in the West Bank in the near future, so why bother protesting?

After Christmas, however, this confidence began to fade into uncertainty. At the end of the second round of talks in Washington, an editorial appearing in *El Kuds,* the largest newspaper in East Jerusalem, urged the Palestinians to accept two truths. First, it reiterated the same position that Shamir has long affirmed—that the Israeli government does not accept the principle of exchanging land for peace and, therefore, is not prepared to withdraw from the Territories. Second, the *El Kuds* piece cautioned that the Israeli government views the Palestinian problem as but one rather peripheral problem in Israel's overall relationship with the Arab world. Israel thus feels free to continue settlement and land expropriation, convinced that its policies in the Territories have no bearing whatsoever on the negotiations and the peace process.

The *El Kuds* analysis was soon confirmed in a series of hard data that astonished the Palestinians. Early this year, the Israeli government released figures that showed an enormous level of investment in the settlements. One quarter of the Ministry of Housing's total budget, one quarter of Israel's budget for encouraging capital investments, and a major portion of its budget for roads and services were earmarked for the Territories. These allocations all represented a several hundred percent increase over the same entries in the 1990 budget. The Shamir government clearly intends to escalate dramatically the Jewish population of the West Bank and Gaza over the next two years, precisely during the period of transition leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian government. Meanwhile, Shamir finds himself fending off assaults from hard-liners on the Right: Just raising the issue of autonomy during the Washington talks created a government crisis that has caused the Likud to lose its majority in the Knesset and forced early elections in Israel. Thus Israel appears before the world community as more deeply committed than ever to its rule in the Territories and its settlement plans. This agenda, indeed, now appears to take precedence over Israel's immigration and absorption needs, its desire to solve problems of poverty and unemployment, and all its other domestic concerns. And only a few Israeli commentators noted that the recent budget figures reflected a dramatic change in Zionist politics, which had always made immigration and absorption its preeminent goal.

This grim picture of the Israeli status quo prompted the Palestinians to regard the peace process with a growing sense of futility. They saw the talks as an endless process that would revolve around procedural matters. The United States and the world community were concerned with new problems and were not intervening in the negotiations the way many Palestinians had hoped they would. In the meantime, Israel was creating facts on the ground that would irreversibly damage the prospects for achieving Palestinian statehood.

And since the talks convened in Washington, sectarian conflict within the Palestinian community has added weight to these facts. Within weeks, it became clear that the rejectionists—the Palestinian organizations that had opposed the political process—were gaining strength. Far left groups—most notably, the Popular Front and the Democratic Front—renewed their campaigns of violent attacks on Jewish settlers in the Territories. Two religious Muslim groups that had also opposed the peace

negotiations picked up newfound public support. (According to the fundamentalist reading of Islamic law, the land of Palestine belongs to the Muslims and cannot be negotiated away.) Faisal Husseini visited Hebron College and was met with raucous cries of derision. When he arrived at a public meeting in the Arab Village of Tul Karem, the community staged a general strike protesting his support of the peace process. The strike had been organized by the Muslim fundamentalists, who were also responsible for the violent disruptions that prevented Husseini from delivering his speech at a local movie theater and forced him to return to Jerusalem. The following day, a Tul Karem fundamentalist was stabbed to death by Husseini supporters. Navhan Haraisha, an activist in one of the political committees formed in the Territories to aid the delegation headed by Husseini, admitted that the Palestinian representatives to the negotiations had lost a great deal of their credibility: "People are asking us more and more why we are even continuing with the negotiations while Israel is increasing its settlement activities and is barring all possibilities for a compromise."

The Israeli government responded to the shooting and killing of the settlers with deportations and mass arrests—precisely the sort of measures that played into the hands of those Palestinians who opposed the peace process. The settlers, for their part, carried out acts of revenge. They uprooted trees, destroyed Arab vehicles, and shot at windows of Arab houses. They also began a new round of protest settlements. On the Palestinian side, anger and frustration grew. Assemblies organized by the Left and the Muslim fundamentalists drew large crowds. Articles in East Jerusalem newspapers, slogans on walls of houses, and fliers distributed in the streets demanded the cessation of the "American circus" and denounced "the traitorous and useless negotiations that do not address even the minimum of Palestinian aspirations."

Does anything remain of the hope that filled the lobby of the small hotel the day the Palestinian delegation left for Madrid? "Yes," says attorney Talal Abu Afifa, from the refugee camp of Shuofat in East Jerusalem. Formerly accused of leading Shabiba, the PLO youth movement in the West Bank, Abu Afifa now serves as an adviser to the peace delegation. In his opinion, "We, the Palestinians, have achieved something through the peace process. First of all, we have drawn some public opinion to our side through the mass media. Secondly, for the first time in decades, a real rift has occurred between Israel and the United States." In spite of the growing opposition to the talks within the Palestinian community, he is convinced that the negotiations will continue. "We don't have an alternative. We will not withdraw from the talks.... If we abandon the peace process, the Israeli government will be ecstatic. For them, it will be a great victory. Since the Israeli government is doing everything it can to sabotage the talks, it is our obligation to persist and continue." In the West Bank and Gaza, many still recognize the importance of not giving up on the peace process, which despite the many obstacles in its way, is still the first breakthrough of its kind since the beginning of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. But for their voices to be heard, Palestinian supporters of a negotiated settlement have to resist the forces on both sides of the conflict poised to lead them into frustration and despair. □

SILWAN

(Continued from p. 27)

room, his toys. Now, the little boy cowers in bed, shaking, the covers pulled over his head, no longer willing to open his eyes to strangers. Was there a reason that a court order—justified or not—had to be carried out at three in the morning?

Moussa's shaking hands show me a cherished document, a letter of praise for his grandfather, the *mukhtar* of Silwan, signed by eight distinguished Jerusalem rabbis. It describes his grandfather as a "great friend of the Jews" and proclaims that "the excellent neighborly relations should serve as a model for our children's children...." This presumably brings us to Moussa's generation, and the generation of settlers who now guard the steel door outside Moussa's home, refusing entry to Moussa's houseguests without settler approval. Moussa is shaking with anger, with frustration, with terror that the settlers will carry out their threats. Moussa was not built to be a hero on the frontline of a settler-Palestinian conflict.

So I sit and listen to the stories repeated by Moussa, by Weedad, the endless repetition of the cruelty of the settlers, of the soldiers, of my government. And I wonder how brave I will be if the soldiers appear when I am here, carrying out a court order that evicts Moussa from the balance of his house. Will I bear true witness for the deaf ears of the world (I and my testimony, grown suspect by visiting with these people)? Will I raise a thin voice of morality, inaudible over the screams of the family and the shouted orders of the soldiers? Will I remain unmoved as the soldiers bully us out, in a terrified daze of civil disobedience, fervently trying to remember the lessons of dignity and courage? Will I be caught in the crossfire, like Weedad's son, an innocent victim of my own attempts to be Jewish, so out of line with

the Jewishness of the ultra-Orthodox who ride with me to Silwan, the Jewishness of the settlers that compels them to move into Silwan, the Jewishness of the soldiers who carry out orders of the Jewish State in Silwan? Will I have the courage to behave in a way that I call *my* Jewishness, which seems to some like yet another brand of misinterpreted Judaism, a minority culture, a rare breed, a sect with only a few crazies left?

It's getting dark now. I leave Moussa and begin the climb back to the Dung Gate. A Palestinian child in a wheelchair plays alone in the parking lot, and a soldier retrieves the child's ball, which has rolled under an army jeep. I pass through the Dung Gate and join the dark flock of Jews at the #1 stop. I do not even glance at the Kotel, its stones visible from the station. I board the bus and find an empty seat in the back. A well-braided youngster sits down next to me, closing the gap of women's seats, leaving empty rows for the men to fill. The bus jostles along in the darkness, and I half listen to a young Chasid trying to sell a book of poetry by Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav to the other passengers. "If you read this book with good intentions," he says, "you will find great wisdom." I am tempted to buy a copy, but he doesn't even offer me one. Finally he sits down in the last row, and the bus slowly meanders through the crooked, narrow streets, emptying itself of passengers. The bus is dark, and through the window I watch the rain drip into puddles under street lights. At first I think the drone I hear is coming from the motor, but soon it becomes stronger, and I can make out a melody. It is the Chasid, and he is humming Hatikva, "the hope," our national anthem. Oh please stop, I think to myself. This is too much for a tired and discouraged Jew like me to figure out. He hums it twice through and then he stops. It's now quiet in the bus. I get off at the last stop and so does he, and then he disappears into the night. □

The Religion Clauses

(Continued from p. 30)

> the political and religious freedoms that wall was intended to protect.

In a powerful opinion delivered by Justice Hugo Black (a judicial hero for American Jews), the Court invalidated the Champaign program as an unconstitutional violation of the establishment clause. "The First Amendment," Black declared, "rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other within its respective sphere.... The First Amendment has erected a wall between Church and State which must be kept high and impregnable."

McCollum was a watershed for American Jews, and a source of great communal pride. For Leo Pfeffer, the Jewish role in the decision signalled that "American Jewry had come of age" and "would no longer remain silent while its rights and those of its children in the public schools were infringed upon."

Encouraged by the *McCollum* ruling, American Jewish organizations spearheaded a suit that challenged a similar released-time (i.e., off school premises) program in New York. The Supreme Court's decision in *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952) upheld this program based on the extramural location of the religious instruction. Speaking for the Court, Justice William Douglas asserted: "We follow the *McCollum* case. But we cannot expand it to cover the present released-time program unless separation of Church and State means that public institutions can make no adjustments of their schedules to accommodate the religious needs of the people."

The accommodationist tone of Douglas's opinion deflated Jewish separationist hopes. Especially disturbing was his claim that "the First Amendment does not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State." As Pfeffer put it, the *Zorach* ruling triggered "rejoicing and exultation in the camps of Amalek; gloom and despair in the tents of Israel." Did *Zorach* eclipse *Everson* and *McCollum,* or was it a narrow judicial aberration?

The Warren Court (1953–1969) is renowned for leaning toward the latter view. Its rulings on religious questions were among the most provocative stands that sealed its liberal reputation. Against the backdrop of *Everson, McCollum,* and *Zorach,* the Warren Court gave fresh meaning to the religion clauses through a series of sharply contested cases involving public school prayer, sabbath observance, religious tests for public office, parochial school aid, taxpayer standing, evolution and creationism, and conscientious objection to war. American Jewish agencies were leading players in all these cases. Pfeffer—the longtime presiding tactician on American Jewish church-state litigation—proudly announced in 1966 that "our absolutist policy has now become the supreme law of the land through a series of decisions to which our test cases, briefs, and other writings contributed substantially."

The Supreme Court's flat rejection of public school prayer in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963) stand as perhaps the Jewish community's greatest victories. At the same time, the *Engel* and *Schempp* decisions sharply antagonized American Catholics. In a blistering

editorial, the Catholic magazine *America* lambasted Jews for their part in the school prayer decisions: "The time has come for these fellow citizens of ours to decide among themselves what they conceive to be the final objective of the Jewish community in the United States—in a word, what bargain they are willing to strike as one of the minorities in a pluralistic society."

Meanwhile, controversy over church-state relations was heating up on another front: the constitutionality of governmental aid to religious schools. At issue was the Kennedy administration's proposal to extend federal aid to the nation's public elementary and secondary schools. On constitutional grounds, the proposed legislation specifically excluded religious schools as beneficiaries. This time, Orthodox Jews and Catholics joined forces to protest the legislation as discriminatory. And significantly, the Kennedy legislation produced a philosophical schism in the Synagogue Council of America, dividing the Orthodox from the Reform and Conservative branches of American Judaism. The Johnson administration's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) threw all the religious players in the struggle off balance by reversing the thrust of Kennedy's efforts to exclude religious schools from federal aid. In *Flast v. Cohen* (1968), Orthodox Jews and Catholics again found themselves cast as political bedfellows. The ultra-Orthodox Agudath Israel of America, for example, called upon Jews "to publicly disown the American Jewish Congress for gravely damaging Jewish interests." The newspaper for Philadelphia's archdiocese, meanwhile, tried to impugn Pfeffer's character: "We believe the time has come to ask this gentleman just who are paying the bills. Has such litigation become so highly profitable for him that he can afford to concentrate on such cases?"

Without judging the constitutional merits of the question of government aid to religious schools, the Court decided a more fundamental issue: the right or standing of a taxpayer to bring such a suit. At the same time it handed down the *Flast* decision, the Court also upheld the lending of textbooks to parochial school students in *Board of Education v. Allen*. With *Allen,* the Court seemed to be shifting away from a strict constitutional approach to church-state relations—an uncomfortably ambiguous turn in the career of the notoriously liberal Warren Court.

The Burger Court (1969–1986) at first seemed likely to reclaim the newly threatened terrain of strict separationism. Another decision involving public aid to religious schools, *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), was the first major test case. *Lemon* invalidated legislation in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania that granted generous aid to sectarian elementary and secondary schools. The Court used three basic questions to test the constitutionality of this legislation: 1) Does the statute have a secular legislative purpose? 2) Is its principal or primary effect one that either advances or inhibits religion? and 3) Does the statute foster an excessive government entanglement with religion?

Writing for a nearly unanimous Court, Burger declared: "The substantial religious character of these church-related schools gives rise to entangling church-state relationships of the kind the Religion Clauses sought to avoid." Burger also argued that legislation benefiting a few religious groups provokes political divisiveness and social fragmentation.

In a bold public statement, nine national Jewish organizations—representing synagogal, rabbinic, and civic groups—welcomed the Court's ban on direct aid to sectarian educational institutions:

> We are convinced that these decisions will bring renewed strength and vitality to religious liberty and the separation of church and state, the free, democratic public school, and religion itself. The historic rulings vindicate the position we have long held in opposition to governmental aid, directly or indirectly, to religiously controlled schools, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.

Orthodox Jews again vehemently denounced the Court's decision. The National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA) charged that the American Jewish community was being dismantled by inside agitators. "The American Jewish Congress and its counsel, Leo Pfeffer, instituted these cases and are largely responsible for the result. They now have the obligation to make sure the Jewish community can take care of its schools." The American Jewish Congress replied that it would not be "bulldozed into surrendering our principles on church-state separation by unseemly attacks from some Orthodox spokesmen." And Pfeffer, long used to such attacks, had issued his own challenge to the religious community in a speech five years earlier:

> It is absurd to urge that the Jewish community needs government aid to maintain its day-school system. If but 10 percent of what is spent weekly on that Philistine abomination known as the bar mitzvah or 10 percent of what is spent on erecting and maintaining temple edifices or so-called Jewish hospitals were set aside for the Jewish day-school system, it would have more money than it would know how to spend and could take care many times over of every Jewish child seeking enrollment.

Encouraged by the *Lemon* decision, the American Jewish Congress continued to press for full cessation of public aid to sectarian schools. As a constituent member of the National Coalition for Public Education and Religious Liberty (the National PEARL), the AJC spearheaded a nationwide campaign to get the Supreme Court to restrict government aid to religious schools and colleges. It also participated in a vast range of other cases, addressing such issues as abortion, required chapel attendance at U.S. military academies, posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools, and state-sponsored religious displays.

On the more fundamental question of church-state relations and the establishment clause, Jews remained vigilant defenders of the separationist cause, but were dealt a rather surprising setback in the 1984 decision *Lynch v. Donnelly*. Harvard law professors Alan Dershowitz and Susan Estrich and Marc Stern of the AJC (among others) submitted an amicus brief that attacked the city government's sponsorship of a Christmas nativity scene in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The brief, jointly filed by the AJC and the Anti-Defamation League, charged that the display of a nativity scene "by a government instrumentality is the display of a Christian religious symbol, in recognition, celebration and commemoration of a religious event. This government action prefers the belief of one religion over another, thus creating an establishment of a particular religion—the Christian religion."

Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Burger declared, "It would be ironic ... if the inclusion of a single symbol of a particular historic religious event, as part of a celebration acknowledged in the Western World for twenty centuries, and in this country by the people, by the Executive Branch, by the Congress, and the courts for two centuries, would so 'taint' the city's exhibit as to render it violative of the establishment clause." In a stinging dissent, Justice William Brennan wrote that the Court's ruling in *Lynch* represented "a long step backwards to the days when Justice Brewer could arrogantly declare for the Court that 'this is a Christian nation.'"

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (renamed in 1968) echoed Brennan's concern for the stability of recent separationist victories. "Now we are in a period in which efforts to bring religion into our public life are intensifying, as are the efforts by some to identify the United States as a Christian country," the Council warned. "Vigorous efforts to protect the principle of church-state separation are vital at this time."

Separationist forces were especially disturbed by Burger's contention in the majority decision that the Constitution "affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely toleration, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any." But the Court seemed to return a separationist posture in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985). The *Jaffree* decision, which was in line with the Warren Court's rulings on school prayer, invalidated Alabama legislation promoting silent prayer and meditation in public schools as an unconstitutional violation of the establishment clause.

However, *Jaffree* was far from a ringing affirmation of separationist principles. American Jews found the dissenting opinions of Justices Burger, White, and Rehnquist enormously troubling. In his dissenting opinion, Rehnquist issued a sweeping indictment of the Court's establishment clause jurisprudence. "The 'wall of separation between church and state,'" he wrote, "is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned." Rehnquist's position has not yet won a majority. But with the Court now under his charge, American Jews have new reason to rededicate themselves to the struggle to preserve the doctrine of strict separation of church and state.

Even as they prepare for the next round of litigation, however, American Jews can be well satisfied with the role they have played in defending the separationist cause and promoting religious liberty in America. Thirty years ago, Pfeffer argued that American Judaism owed a "great debt of gratitude toward a system which, after almost two thousand years of persecution, has given Jews a real haven and a real equality." That system, for Pfeffer, was most fully captured in the uncompromising language of the First Amendment's religious clauses. American Jews have repaid this debt manyfold in preserving the integrity of this system. As the U.S. celebrates the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights, it should acknowledge its profound debt of gratitude to its Jewish citizens for keeping the democratic faith. □

Eighteen Points in Evidence

(Continued from p. 56)

Shock that this was in the newspaper.

7. This image comes to me: my father throwing a baby on the bed, holding it/her/me by the left arm.

8. One night I cry because I see my passion as existing on the edge of my hatred and am afraid that passion set loose will turn me into uncontrolled rage, that I'll pull out eyes.

9. I have exhibit A, a letter from one of the pioneers in writing about adult survivors of incest: about the part

w/ your father and spanking. Popping the elastic of your underwear, etc. All that is abusive. Definitely. The feeling comes through clearly that he took ownership of your body. Whether what he did was clearly and overtly sexual or whether it stayed in the realm of the gray ("love pats"), it's still inappropriate, violating, and wrong. And there must have been enough of a clearly sexual overtone to give you the idea that spanking was a form of sex. I'd call it sexual abuse.

10. I wrote my friend Harriet about it. She said she was shocked—nice Jewish man and all that—and then she said once her husband touched her ass and she hated it and only later did she remember that her father used to touch her like that.

11. Whenever I talk to my parents on the phone, the split in me grows. They are nice people with problems, growing older. Nothing is wrong. We are friendly. I almost feel I could explain things to HIM, tell him what he did was wrong, that he made it so that there were sexual overtones, everywhere—but I'm not ready. SHE, on the other hand, would fall apart.

12. I told my friend Terri that I would write her about something serious. We grew up together. I begin the letter in my head. I feel guilty: I'm wresting away her view of my father. Her view of the solidity of the world.

13. What if I'm wrong? What if the image of his head between my legs is wrong?

14. Jon and I start to make love and when I open my legs I start crying.

15. In a movement group for survivors, we lie on our backs and the teacher says, Open your arms, open your pelvis, and I start crying.

16. And what about the dreams, of lying in bed with him and my little sister Shelly and his arm heavy around me, me biting his fingers so he'll let go?

17. I could never stand anyone helping me on with my coat. I can't stand a man's arm around my neck. In 1991, I reach a memory or make a memory about being in the back of my grandparents' closet with coats all over me and someone's touch heavy on my back. Someone in a white plaid jacket, who wants to take me with him.

What is it?

18. What is it? I write my way into it. I write about it in an essay, and think of pseudonyms. I write about it in fiction and think of excuses. I imagine my mother reading a short story of mine and saying, But people will think this is us! How could you do such a thing? I imagine telling her: You know the child sexual abuse work I did that summer. I'm interested in the subject.

Off the hook.

My civic duty. An important subject, after all.

I deny myself. I deny my memories. I deny what I have become. □

FICTION

(Continued from p. 68)

more than half an hour or sits for that long, the result is the same, inflammation.

"Have you thought of going yourself?" I ask.

"I could not leave your mother for that long. She would not be well enough."

My father sits with the hiking boots he has bought for this trip out west laced tight on his feet. They are spanking new and he has already cleaned them of mud from our climb this afternoon. I take pleasure in seeing him so fond of the mountains, so open to the world out here. "You and I could go," I say. "Together. A nurse could help mother if we went next summer."

"I will give it some thought," my father says, but I can see that the veil has already dropped—the complex configuration of blank terror that can still scare me with its suddenness, the yearning on his face vanished. He has gone to Madagascar. He empties the coffee he has spilled in the saucer back into his cup. "I have made a mess here," he says, replacing the dry saucer underneath. He stands up. Pulls down the sides of his jacket. Despite the hiking boots, he has dressed for dinner. "Would you like to go for a walk with me, Ephram?"

Yes, I say, and get my coat, eager as always.

Last summer Judith and I took Philip to Europe because I wanted to show him where his grandfather grew up. Though the bakery was no longer there—an insurance office now—I described everything about the original building, and the oven. I held him in my arms while he listened with intelligence and care, and I kissed his long lashes and felt his soft cheek against mine. I wondered what he knew that I would never know about him, what pleased him that could

not be spoken. When would he grow past me, leave his fatherland, hack and chop and hew whole forests until he could find one piece of hallowed ground to plant the seed of his own self?

One night in our hotel I could not sleep and began to write: "Every son's story about his father is, in a sense, written to save himself from his father. It is told so that he may go free and in the telling the son wants to speak so well that he can give his father the power to save himself from his own father." I wrote this on a note card, put it in an airmail envelope, and planned to send it with its Amsterdam postmark to my father.

The following morning a call from my mother let us know that my father had suffered a stroke. We flew home immediately, and I rushed to see him in the hospital while Judith waited with Philip at the house. My mother was there by his bed. An IV bottle was connected to his wrist. His other arm I saw had purplish bruises from all the injections and from the blood samples taken. The effects of the stroke made him confuse the simplest of objects, or draw on archaic uses—a pen became a plume. A part of his brain had lost the necessary signals for referencing things and faces with words, and now dealt in wild compensatory searches to communicate. When he spoke of Judith he referred to her as my husband, called me "ram" trying to pronounce Ephram, and, saddest of all, could not understand why I had so much trouble understanding him. He had once spoken three languages fluently, and to see him in this state was more of a shock than I could bear. When he fell asleep, I left his room to speak with the doctor, a neurologist who explained to me that a ruptured blood vessel was causing the illogical and distorted speech. Bleeding in the brain. The image for me was vivid, his brain leaking, his skull swelling from the fluid's pressure inside and all one could do was wait.

One day while I sat and read by his bed, he said my name clearly and asked if I could help him get dressed. He had a white shirt and tie in the closet. He spoke with difficulty from the stroke, although his condition had improved and we all believed he would be released soon. I dressed him and because he was cold I put my sweater over his shoulders and tied the arms in front so he looked like a college man again. While he sat up in bed I held onto his hand to steady him, reminded of how we used to waltz together when I was ten. I said something to him that I had carried around with me for a long while, something that had no basis in fact, only in the private burden of a son traversing the globe for a father's loss. "I'm sorry if I've disappointed you," I told him and he answered me in speech slowed by his stroke, "I forget everything, Ephram." I nodded, but then cried later at his funeral because I thought and hoped he had meant to say forgive. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

central tenets of two other great world religions, Christianity and Islam.

Some Jews would argue that Christmas, as it is celebrated in the United States, is merely a family holiday, a time to exchange gifts at the end of the year, extend fellowship, and spread good cheer. Others claim that not to exchange gifts and cards would hurt business, or else that intermarriage with Christians demands that they have a tree next to the menorah and give their children the "best of both cultures." This type of reasoning, though possessing elements of validity, still amounts to a rationalization of oppression. This oppression is no less real because it is enforced by internal motive rather than external threat.

Symbols or marks of ethnicity are not merely tokens to be considered lightly. The donning of the *kaffiyeh* by supporters of Palestinian national rights clearly declares the wearer's position. The yarmulke is another such outward mark of adherence to a set of beliefs and a declaration of nationality. And the jeri-curl, the process, and the konk, as Malcolm X described the chemical straightening of curly hair, are often viewed in the African-American community as traitorous acts of self-hatred. Some Jews have taken this attempt at physical denial of ethnicity to the point of self-mutilation, bringing the rate of rhinoplasty in some communities to that more commonly associated with tonsillectomy.

The desire to fit in at any cost, "to be just like everyone else" in the majority culture, is one of the saddest features of the contemporary United States. It is this suggested conformity that has contributed to the "Christmasization" of Chanukah, and worse, to the belief that American citizenship demands the Christmas tree be found at every hearth. Enforced by a media barrage of so-called normal people, Jews and other ethnic Americans feel inadequate and ashamed, longing to take their place at the table. To be permitted to do that, they are told to use the toothpaste that will make their teeth the whitest white, their waists the thinnest thin, and their holidays look like a Norman Rockwell family gathering.

It is most interesting to remember the actual history that Jews celebrate at Chanukah. After the annexation of Israel by Alexander the Great and the Macedonians, the emperor made himself a hero for Jews by being the first conqueror who permitted them to worship as they pleased. For quite some time, many Jews, free to choose their own lifestyle, hellenized, and were able to join a world community at the baths and the gymnasium. It was in this context that the rural Hasmonean family rejected newly enforced worship of Greek gods and began the revolt that led to the reestablishment of a Jewish state in Israel. The Maccabees struck out against the slow destruction of their people by rejecting what had become a very attractive majority culture for many of their compatriots.

I am not proposing that Jews reject Western culture in its entirety to return to the shtetl. After all, Jews have

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Holocaust Survivor Cries When Christian Speaks

Simon Engelman is a member of the Golden Rule Society (GRS) that works with Christians to fight anti-Semitism. He was very emotionally affected when Jan Willem van der Hoeven spoke at Rabbi Dr. Goldman's Temple Sholom in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Engelman escaped death because a Polish General inmate took a liking to him and they escaped the death-line together due to the General's quick thinking. Engelman said, "It was almost impossible to escape as the dogs were trained to jump at the throats of inmates and tear their throats out, if they wavered at all from the death lines." He also saw gentiles and Jews being forced into large ditches and then lime water was poured on them, and they were slowly killed as the lime ate their bodies. "This madness must never be repeated again, and it is people like Jan Willem that will help prevent it," Engelman said emotionally as he hugged this Christian minister from Israel.

Mr. van der Hoeven, who lives in Jerusalem, is the official spokesman for the International Christian Embassy (ICEJ). He lashed out at the World Press for being pro-Arab by believing the highly financed Arab Propaganda. "My wife, who is an Arab, sobbed herself to sleep many a night crying out, 'Why doesn't the press tell the real story of the brutal attacks by Islamic Fundamentalists on innocent Israeli citizens.' They only report what the Israelis must do in self-defense to prevent this bloody massacre of their own people," he told Engelman.

The overflowing crowd of over 800 people listened intently to every word Jan Willem had to say. Christians came from as far away as Titusville to hear this outstanding human being speak. Over 200 people had to be turned away due to lack of space in the synagogue.

Jan Willem pleaded with American Jews and Christians to let their voices be heard in Washington. "Have the Washington politicians forgotten so soon that the Mufti of Jerusalem, who represented the Palestinian Arabs, was on the side of Hitler during WW2 and the present day Arab Palestinians still maintain the desire to complete Hitler's final solution by pushing the Israelis into the sea. It was only the Jewish Brigade, composed of Jewish Palestinians, that fought valiantly with the Allies in WW2," Jan Willem said.

Danny Kravitz, Chairman of the Florida State Political Action Network Committee of B'nai B'rith, was the key organizer of this history making event. Many prominent guests were present from nationally recognized organizations as well as local, state and federal officials. A message of praise for the International Christian Embassy was given by Ambassador Dr. Moshe Liba, Consul General of Israel, before Jan Willem spoke.

A year's subscription to the Middle East Intelligence Digest (mailed from Jerusalem) is $25 to cover cost of mailing. Make checks out to I.C.E.J. and mail to GRS, P.O. Box 809, Boynton Beach, FL 33425

played a large role in developing Western culture over the last three centuries. However, I feel it imperative that we recognize our essential difference, our *otherness,* and revel in it. Let us burn our Chanukah candles and remember what it means to be a slave: a slave in shackles as in Egypt, or a slave of conformity, as under the Greeks. Let us bear witness to the horror of slavery that we ourselves create, and to the suffering of other nations in this world. A Christmas tree is not a Thanksgiving turkey or a stick of pine in the living room. For the Jew it is a symbol of self-hatred and self-doubt, the mark of the defeated and downtrodden. Let us leave it behind with our chains.

Jeff Bogursky
Bloomville, New York

To the Editor:

I believe Christmas is not a religious holiday. The historic antipathy of the Puritans to Christmas reflects its pre-Christian origins. Christmas in America is, in effect, a secular holiday of family gatherings and gift-giving that lifts spirits in the dark portion of the year. This is the "White Christmas" of Irving Berlin—himself, of course, a Jew. There is no inevitability about its commercialism. Thinking of others and what gifts would be best suited for them is an act based in thoughts for others—about their daily routines and special interests, and what gifts would complement them. The protestations of religious Christians—such as their regular calls to "put the Christ back in Christmas"—are proof that the religious aspects of the holiday have been forced on it and are, over time, being rejected by the secular culture. As Jews, we need not be oppressed by the claims of religious Christians that this winter solstice celebration is a true religious holiday. Instead, we should feel free to celebrate it or not, as we choose.

Howard Husock
Brookline, Massachusetts

Women and Psychology

To the Editor:

I am writing on behalf of the Association for Women in Psychology, a national organization of nearly two thousand feminist educators, scientists, and clinicians. I want to express my appreciation for Ilene Philipson's "The New No-Man's Land: The

Changing Face of Psychotherapy" (September/October 1991).

It is true that women's entrance in large numbers into professions tends to lower the wages paid relative to professions where there are few women. And when the work the professionals do is characterized as "mother's work" (attending to the emotional needs of clients), lower wages may seem all the more justified, since we should all be provided such nurturance for nothing. Women therapists have always had to deal with clients' resentment at paying for such help beyond the usual reluctance—or at least ambivalence—many therapists' clients exhibit at "having" to pay for what they often see as "friendship," "love," or other emotional supplies. "Mother's love," especially, should be unconditional and, of course, free.

Yet there is an argument to be made for lower fees that could bring therapy into the range of the average person's (and certainly the average female's) ability to pay, independent of the interfering control of managed care agents and the fixed number of sessions mandated by insurers. Therapy fees are seen by the public as too high; few people can afford the $125 per session that is now standard for psychiatrists in big cities. Psychologists and other practitioners charge somewhat less, but when we are talking about weekly or even biweekly sessions for several years, which many therapists feel yield the best results, lower fees must be the answer. Insurance companies will not pay for long-term "treatment" when there is little agreement about methods or what constitutes a "cure." Meaningful, long-term psychotherapy must be affordable and if having more women in the field, as well as increasing the numbers of therapists by training them in nonacademic "professional psychology" schools can accomplish this, I see the consequent "feminization" of therapy as a less important issue. One of the undesirable alternatives to meaningful, long-term therapy is evident in the proliferation of groups for people, especially women, who are willing to accept pathology-based identifications in order to receive emotional support. These groups are free or low-cost compared to private therapy.

Elizabeth Friar Williams
San Francisco, California

A Worthy Cause

To the Editor:

Zvi Klein, a volunteer of the Hatzala Squad in Jerusalem, was killed in December when an Arab bombed his car on the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv Highway. His wife, a Holocaust survivor, suffered broken legs and other serious injuries. His four children in the vehicle were also badly injured. The murdered Jew left a widow in grave condition as well as eight orphaned children.

Rabbis in Jerusalem have set up a fund to help the grief-stricken and impoverished family. I appeal to the readers of *Tikkun* to contribute to this exceptionally worthy fund, as I and many others have done. Donations can be sent to the Keren Hachesed Fund, 4316 Tenth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

This is great mitzvah in which I am sure your readers will want to share.

Rabbi Theodore N. Lewis
St. James, New York

On Lasch

To the Editor:

Having grown up in a white lower-middle-class family, I know a great deal about the so-called "culture of responsibility" that Christopher Lasch defends against critics Michael Kazin and Barbara Ehrenreich ("No Respect," September/October 1991).

Yet as far as I am concerned, Lasch is as contemptuous toward "ordinary people" as any of the PMC (Professional-Managerial Class) experts he condemns. He stirringly calls for "respect [for] popular attitudes in their complexity"; yet his endorsement of popular attitudes is opportunistic and extremely selective. The reason is that Lasch is a *cultural* populist, rather than an economic one, and champions a prescriptively stereotypical *Volk* rather than flesh-and-blood ordinary people. The result is the Jekyll-and-Hyde political personality that Ehrenreich found so puzzling.

In his Dr. Jekyll incarnation, Lasch is a veritable marvel of anti-authoritarian tolerance. He enthrones families like mine on a pedestal of populist adulation and defends their "culture" against PMC imperialism. There's a catch, however. To be thus celebrated, we proles must be *deserving*—that is, we must be true to our supposedly inherent *Kultur*. When flesh and blood fail to conform to stereotype, however, Lasch's Mr. Hyde personality begins to emerge. Having fallen off of our prolish pedestals, we risk the same fate that female cultural populists are currently arranging for the fallen, unwomanly woman. As unprolish proles, Lasch will condemn us as brainwashed and "socialized" automatons, as modernity-whores seduced by MTV, consumerism, the "repulsive ... *Playboy* ethic" or anything else he happens to dislike about contemporary life.

And it's very easy indeed to fall off the pedestal. Take, for example, my father. In the 1950s, being "responsible" meant that he was expected to single-handedly support a family of four on a salary barely sufficient for one. Like many working-class men in such situations, he chafed against domesticity since "responsibility" as defined by big shots (like Lasch) guaranteed his eternal subjugation to the arbitrary will of those big shots. My mother was likewise undeserving. My family's eventual rise from poverty into the lower-middle-class was made possible only because of the second income contributed when she "irresponsibly" entered the labor market despite having two young children to care for. Now, liberal- or socialist-feminist "social engineering" could have helped my mother and thereby my entire family. But then, and as Lasch has argued at every conceivable opportunity, such "entitlements" would have only destroyed the noble character traits that make us proles so inspiring in the first place. Waxing indignant about masculinist irresponsibility, Lasch demands, in effect, that if the world is to be saved from disaster then all males must be marched into responsibility-tutoring stations alongside the refrigerator and toaster oven.

The reason for the paradox, of course, is that Lasch celebrates private responsibility precisely *because* it keeps ordinary people in line; and he celebrates feminism only when it has similar goals.

Lasch is not hostile to *all* PMC social engineering, but rather only to those forms that do not lead to a Republic of Virtue. The PMC that Lasch loves to hate was an old PMC on the upswing. It tried to use the role of the "objective" or "scientific" social expert as a route to privilege; and at its height of power, it challenged the bourgeoisie for a bigger piece of the

pie. Since 1980, however, the corporate classes have crushed this PMC challenge. As with the *volkisch* mandarin Right of old Germany, the American cultural intelligentsia's social aspirations have been thereby circumscribed either to deconstructive nihilism or to pandering to the general boobois clamor for social repression. Accordingly, the new careerist paradigm for the aspiring new-PMC entrepreneur is no longer the Objective Scientist but rather Robert Bellah's smug Moral Philosopher.

If we proles want to stay on our pedestals it is not enough that we be merely "responsible." We must also rant impotent soliloquies against progress, modernity, materialism, individualism, rationalism, science, mass culture, and so on. Having failed in this noble task, our appointed fate awaits us: We once again become modernity-whores fallen from the prolish pedestal. Tails the professor's son wins, heads the laborer's son loses. (So what else is new?)

Ronald P. S. Mahler
St. Paul, Minnesota

Pornography

To the Editor:

Camille Paglia wants to celebrate Robert Mapplethorpe's work as a nod toward the dark and violent Dionysian god named "Nature" ("Misjudging Mapplethorpe: The Art Scene and the Obscene," November/December 1991). Mapplethorpe speaks the harsh truth that "Nature ... is our greatest oppressor," but also our unavoidable fate. That's what makes his work so sexily beautiful for Paglia: "Degradation is at the heart of his eroticism." Mapplethorpe revels in "our unevolved link with the pagan and primeval past," which defines "our deepest nature."

Pubbish. What Paglia assumes without argument here is that nature—human nature—is something simple and unambiguous, primal, nonrational, "chthonian," and very, very pagan. Yet I know of at least two pagans, Plato and Aristotle, who while acknowledging the reality of "appetites" and "passions" and the need to give them their due, would insist that the perfection and fulfillment of human nature lies in the exercise of reason, which controls, educates, and transforms our passionate, "primeval" side. Furthermore, Paglia completely ignores the contributions of Judaism and Christianity, in which human nature, including our sexual nature, is God's gift. If that nature is misused or degraded it corrupts our true selves and thus imperils our own true happiness. Paglia's glib cross-references from Mapplethorpe to the "eroticism" of Catholic iconography only testify to her deep theological and philosophical ignorance of these traditions and the spiritualized *eros* they express.

Is it "natural," then, for a *human* to reduce another "to the status of a thing" or to wish oneself to be so reduced? How can something inhuman and dehumanizing express "our deepest nature" as humans? Isn't this sort of depersonalizing, objectifying, "dirtying-up" of sex exactly what D.H. Lawrence (neither a conservative prude nor a wishy-washy liberal) thought to be the essence of pornography, *and* why he thought it so hateful? And if Mapplethorpe's sadomasochistic portraits epitomize this objectification of persons, as Paglia admits, aren't they likewise vile, antihuman, ultimately antisex and antigay? Shouldn't we be censuring them rather than admiring them? Aren't they false rather than true?

Paglia cannot distinguish between the erotic and the obscene (her uncritical praise for "popular culture" and her blunt dismissal of "feminism" only prove my point). The question raised but not quite answered by Rochelle Gurstein is: How can that distinction be drawn, articulated, and debated *publicly,* so that we can avoid the twin evils of stifling culturally enriching artistic expressions of sexuality, and letting the image-merchants further degrade the integrity and intimacy of sex and especially the dignity of women? *That* is what needs to be done, but sadly, neither conservatives nor liberals have the faintest idea of how to do it.

One final thought: I find it strange and distressing that gays, who have labored so hard to get their due respect and care from society have not, by and large, publicly challenged the glorification of violent, exploitative, and impersonal sex in some of Mapplethorpe's photos. Unwillingness on the part of gays to question the depersonalization of sex can only reinforce the worst misconceptions of all those bigots who are only too quick to deny gays a just acknowledgment of their humanity.

Michael J. Quirk
Bellerose, New York

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