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

TIKKUN

Reviews: *Elliot Currie on Crimes of the Overclass and William McFeely on Martin Luther King, Jr.*
Editorials: *The Binding of Isaac; Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia; The Middle East Peace Process*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1992 $6.00

1492

Columbus, The Expulsion of Jews from Spain & The European Occupation of the Western Hemisphere



Sacvan Bercovitch
Natalie Zemon Davis
Victor Perera
Aron Rodrigue
Sean Wilentz
Michael Zuckerman

Goodbye to Maus
Art Spiegelman

Race Divisions.
Pat Williams

Earth Matters
Arthur Waskow

Rethinking Syria
Larry Cohler

Eros and the Jews
David Biale

Multiple Sclerosis
Jerry Rosenfield

Clinton and the Democrats

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Gary Peller, Peter Gabel, Adam Shatz, Mark Gopin, David Schulman, Wally Katz, Michael Lerner

Freestyle, On the First of Tishray

The metaphor here is the pool, regular
and deep as the tradition itself. First I float,
still and buoyant in what I don't
accept. Then I shatter the surface, a scholar
dissecting text not to destroy but to enrich,
a farmer plowing and disking the earth
before planting. On land, I forget breath's
noisy ball bearings, the flutter kick's
fringes blazing like tangible will. I imagine
that faith is nothing but a grudging promise
of repetition, like these laps, until this
continual splash in the mind begins—
not with grievance or prayer
but as gasp, a momentary bargain struck with the air.

Enid Shomer

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 7 NUMBER 5

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Letters

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

CLINTON AND THE DEMOCRATS

To the Editor:

I understand that as a nonprofit organization, *Tikkun* is prevented from endorsing any candidates, and I also noticed your qualification that you wanted "to leave aside the question of Clinton's politics," but I do want you to know that your editorial on Clinton affected me deeply and opened me to supporting him in a way that I would not have done before reading it. What worried me most about him was the nagging feeling I had that he simply couldn't be trusted. I guess I too had been affected by the way he is represented in the media, so it was very reassuring to have your assessment based on a personal encounter. Part of what I trust about you as the editor of *Tikkun* is the way that you are willing to show your vulnerability and uncertainty about things, to admit mistakes, and to show yourself going through the same process that I have to go through, rather than to do what other editors do, which is to present themselves as a finished product without any doubts or uncertainties. I've never been a groupie—I consider myself an extremely critical, independent lesbian feminist. Yet I find myself believing your perceptions and being influenced by your reasoning precisely because you don't seem to feel the need to always show yourself as a finished product or as a macho male who has got everything together. If this kind of leadership could emerge in other parts of the Left, we'd have a chance!

Cathy Newman
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

What kind of baloney is this when you tell us your feelings about Clinton and meanwhile "leave aside the question of his politics?" Isn't that precisely the problem with all the reporting on this campaign, that it leaves aside the fundamental questions of a person's politics? What do I care that you discovered that Clinton reads *Tikkun* or that he is a genuine, sincere, and decent human being, not the sleaze-ball portrayed in the media? The point is

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that even *if* he is sincere and regularly reads this magazine—which, incidentally, is without a doubt the only voice that keeps alive what was best in the sixties—nevertheless this guy is sincere about being someone with politics that we should reject. He formed the Democratic Leadership Council to be the voice of Democratic conservatives who thought the smartest strategy for the Democrats was to try to look more like the Republicans. His victory would be a victory for that tendency within the Democratic Party, *not* for the kinds of tendencies represented by *Tikkun*.

Joshua Cohen
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the Editor:

One reason I like what Robert Fitch has to say is that I tried to reform the Democratic Party from within by becoming active in the Jackson campaign in 1988. If ever there was an opportunity for leftists to organize a voice of their own, that was it, and Jackson won millions of votes in the primaries. Don't you imagine then that that constituency would have a powerful voice in shaping future deliberations and moving the party in a progressive direction? Well, nothing of the sort happened. Jackson used the same language of "organizing a movement" that Brown used in 1992, but once the primaries were over Jackson nixed any serious grass roots organization. Instead, he insisted on keeping The Rainbow Coalition as a private base of support for his own future political ambitions, blocking all attempts to keep his movement organized as a movement. And this is the way it has been every presidential year, from McGovern in 1972 to Kennedy in 1980, and to Brown this year.

I can't believe that all this is simply the product of evil or self-seeking people. It's built into the dynamics of the party system itself. Once these people taste the possibility of power, they forget about grass roots organizing and focus exclusively on how they can get themselves back into prominence and power at some future time.

There is one problem Fitch does not address and that none of us have been able to solve: how to build a third party effort. I've seen numerous efforts, of which the group that calls itself "The New Party" is a typical example. Their strategic idea is this: build a third party, but then on your own progressive party line endorse the Democratic Party candidate when doing the opposite (namely, putting forward your own candidate), would have the consequence of making a moderately good Democrat lose to a far worse Republican.

But it isn't enough. The big problem is that we still don't have something to say that wins people to our politics. And here I have to say that the best thing I've heard in years is your platform for a politics of meaning. Any way that we could get these ideas out into the world would be terrific—I think it's the first substantively new idea I've heard in twenty years on the Left.

Sol Cohen
New York City

To the Editor:

Robert Fitch repeats the tired old litany of the Left: that we shouldn't support any Democrat because the Democrats are corrupt, but that instead those of us who want progressive social change should build a third party. I used to dance to that melody in the late sixties and early seventies when far more people identified with a left politics than they do today. And guess what? Nothing happened. There were periodic attempts to build this magical alternative, but when push came to shove most Americans returned to the two party system and voted for "the lesser evil." That gave the rest of us two choices: either lament the "false consciousness" of our fellow Americans, or get real and ac-

INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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Interning at TIKKUN is a perfect way to make a real contribution to social change—and a perfect entry into the world of professional publishing. Unfortunately, we can't pay our interns, but we can offer you intellectual excitement and the opportunity to make a real difference in the world. In the past, some interns who have worked for us for 9 months have been hired at NY publishing houses and major newspapers, and some have been hired by TIKKUN.

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WEST COAST INTERNSHIPS are still available. Some of our work is still being done out of our Oakland office. If you'd like to intern or volunteer there, write to Elliot Neaman c/o TIKKUN, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, Ca. 94619.

DID YOU GET MY LETTER?

If you're a subscriber, you should have received or will soon be receiving a personal letter from me. In it I discuss why we're moving part of our operation to New York, what it's been like for me as editor the past year, and other inside and personal information that I don't feel comfortable printing in the magazine.

If you're not a subscriber, **this is one more reason to subscribe**—so that you get the inside story. And here are two more: 1. We are planning a series of salons and discussion groups around the country. The only way we can notify about the next salon in your area is if you're on our subscription list. 2. It costs you more money to buy on the newsstand, and we only get 40 percent of what you pay, whereas we get it all when you subscribe.

knowledge that this is really how it is, and then try our best to shape the alternatives in the Democratic Party in a better way. Now Fitch comes along and wants us to join him in the old lament. Let me put the following to him: I'll join your third party after the first five million others have joined. At that point, your party will still only represent a tiny minority of Americans, so you should welcome me in. But I doubt if you'll do anything more than waste the time of your earlier recruits and never get to the point where you can take me up on my offer. Meanwhile, the good that you could have done by organizing within the Democratic Party will never happen because you'll be spending your efforts elsewhere.

John Lawrence
New York, New York

Bob Fitch replies:

John Lawrence's contention that we could be doing good inside the Democratic Party if we didn't divert energies to building a third party is precisely what is in contention.

The central mystification of liberal Democrats remains their pretense that the Republicans are the governing party. And that they, the Dems, represent a decent, albeit flawed, alternative. In Weberian terms, they choose the politics of responsibility, while we critics follow the utopian ethic of ultimate ends.

But the line that runs through U.S. politics is not a moral one. What we have is a division between local and federal control. The Republicans serve as America's governing party at the federal level, expressing more or less the will of the corporate multinationals. The Dems function as the natural governing party of the cities, representing the will of FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate); in the fifties and sixties the Dems carried out FIRE's agenda of urban renewal, in the seventies, planned shrinkage and gentrification. Today, it's the Ford-Rockefeller agenda of privatization, local self-help, and workfare.

Meanwhile, the urban Dems have presided over the physical destruction of vast areas of American cities—a demolition which has lasted longer than the rubble produced by World War II bombing; Democratic urban rule is coincident with the deepest social disintegration in U.S. history; "urban mercantilism"—their familiar strategy of replacing workers and industry with office buildings and professionals—has produced a kind of economic monoculture that is ultimately no more viable than the Central American banana republic model.

Not coincidently, the urban Democrats resemble the old Mexican PRI—a totally corrupt, one-party government that through homeopathic doses of coercion and co-optation keeps all elements of society under control—in the ultimate interests of the big landed property and the banks. And the participating liberal and left intellectuals form just as integral a part of the corrupt conglomerate as the trade union hacks, the foundation bureaucrats, and the recipients of government contracts for warehousing the poor.

But Mr. Lawrence does raise a valid question: why talk about organizing outside the Democratic Party now when all previous efforts have failed? Here are three fresh reasons:

1. Ideological. Clinton's New Covenant makes explicit what had heretofore been only implicit in Democratic Party practice. The party program calls for a return to "basic American values" of "personal responsibility, individual liberty, tolerance, religion, family values, and hard work." It intones: "We believe in free enterprise and the power of market forces." Thus Clinton has defined a politics of meaning in terms of a neo-Republican commitment to the Protestant ethic.

2. Political. Perot's failed candidacy—his equally spectacular rise and fall—exposes the lack of an authentic party system in the U.S. So shallow are party loyalists that it took Ross the Boss little more than one appearance on the Larry King show to vault over the choices of our two-party condominium. A recent *LA Times* poll showed that several other public figures could have done as well as Perot.

3. Economic. Monopoly capitalism is dead. Big Steel, Big Auto, and Big Labor are all gone. The unions can't, as Galbraith used to explain, demand a raise and get it passed on to consumers. Gone too is Fordist economics. Mass production and consumption allowed a certain scope for government regulation and Keynesian redistributionist politics. Global competition sets off falling prices, wages, and profits. A shrinking economic surplus produces bitter confrontation for income shares: The room for political accommodation has shrunk. This means the end of the Democrats as the party of micro-economic regulation and macro-redistribution. Thus the New Covenant replaces the New Deal.

These changes—along with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet bogey—have extinguished nearly all of our excuses for refusing bottom up/independent political action. We can't go on any more about the power of the Dem's egalitarian ideology, or haul out the old argument that the Democratic Party is where the workers are, or advert to the awesome capacity of consumer capitalism to buy everyone off. In fact, with the transition from Fordism to flexible production, some of the oldest ideas of socialism—of workers' control, craft revival, and local autonomy—lose their utopian cast.

The real issue, as Sol Cohen suggests, becomes not *whether* we should engage in independent politics but *how*. I share his skepticism about forming a third electoral party to "represent" people. New York's Liberal Party has never been much more than a vehicle for trade union bosses and other would-be wire-pullers who wanted another electoral "line" for leverage within the Democratic Party. How will the "New Party" be different? Our predicament requires a political instrument that can effect a deeper transformation than anything inspired by the demands of electioneering.

The Church and the Holocaust

To the Editor:

Thanks to Abraham Brumberg and *Tikkun* for bringing readers a reflective report on the London colloquium on the Holocaust on the 50th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference. His review of current thinking on the systematic planning, timing, and undergirding propaganda of the Nazis' extermination of the Jews is helpful and chilling. Our attention was particularly caught by Brumberg's discussion of the differing extents and patterns of complicity in countries other than Germany.

A clear discussion of how different "national groups" involved themselves with the Nazis in deporting and killing Jews and others is certainly important to our understanding of how the horror of the Holocaust was possible. It is especially important for those of us in the Christian community to have an unbiased and historically accurate account of how our various churches took part in these national efforts, both of rescue and of extermination.

Defending the terrible records of our churches and their various complicities in the Holocaust is not our aim, nor dare we seek to wash away overall complicity by compiling the largest number of possible examples of resistance, rescue, and goodness. We need accurate understandings of why Protestants *and* Catholics acted differently in different places so that we can form a clear picture of the actual dynamics that allowed (and allow) evil to metastasize as it did, and those that fostered the good.

Our request of Brumberg, or of those doing the research on which he is reporting, is that the *full* complexity of these historical situations be made known. For historical clarity, and for the purposes of ethical reflection and education, it is not enough to ask, "What of the role of the Catholic Church?"(p.82) in Lithuania and Croatia and France. In addition to the Catholic Church, we need to know about Protestant and Orthodox Christians and their hierarchies in those places and throughout Europe in order to see clearly these historical situations and the challenges they still present to us as Christians today.

Dr. Jay T. Rock
Interfaith Relations
National Council of Churches

Dr. Eugene J. Fisher
Catholic-Jewish Relations
National Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Labor's Victory in Israel

To the Editor:

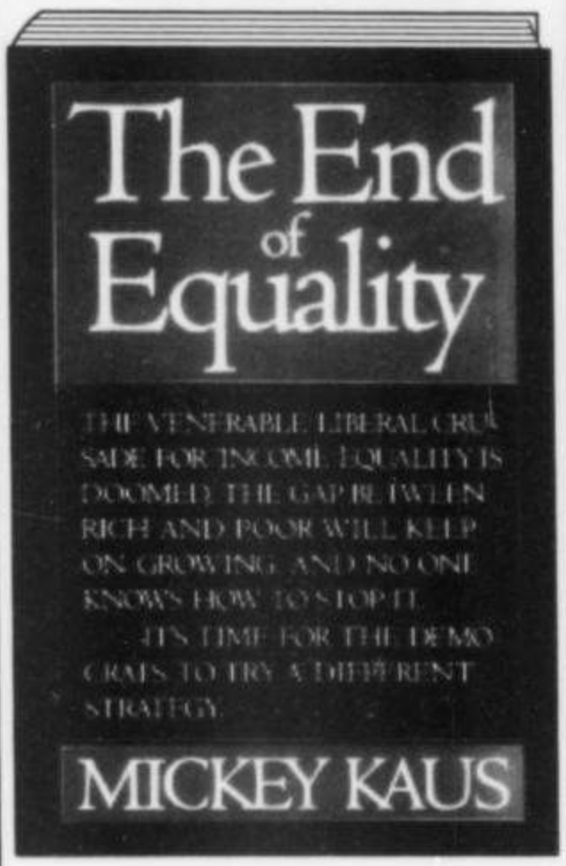
Your editorial piece in wake of the recent Israeli elections summarized many of the emotions I felt when news came of the Labor party victory. As a progressive Orthodox Jew, the long years of the Likud-Nationalist nightmare represented a very lonely time for me. Progressive minded Jews within the liberal movements of Judaism can always fall back on a cadre of like minded friends and associates within their synagogues or *chavurot*. Those of us who are Orthodox Jewish peace activists, such as Oz VeShalom's Yehezkel Landau, face the paradoxical experience of being more welcome in Reform and Conservative congregations than in the Orthodox synagogues we call home.

From the time I was in high school in the seventies I became convinced that the continued occupation of the West Bank did not mesh with my traditional Jewish beliefs. This put me at odds with most of the people I associated with in my synagogue and other Jewish organizations. In the past few years I have been spat upon, called a "self-hating Jew," and even rejected by a former girlfriend for my political views. In the weeks before the June 23 elections in Israel a colleague at the Orthodox Jewish high school I'm employed by stopped talking to me when I told her I would vote for Labor if I lived in Israel.

I almost feel as if Labor's victory was a classic case of good finally triumphing over what had proved to be bad for the Jewish people. The Israeli electorate took an historic opportunity to turn their nation around. Labor's victory was no less a revolution than the election of Abraham Lincoln in this country in 1860 or the Liberal landslide in Britain in 1906. It is true that, to quote Robert Frost, "we have miles to go before we sleep"; Prime Minister-elect Rabin is now facing a difficult task bringing both Meretz and the conservative Tzomet party into his coalition and the negotiations with the Palestinians will be difficult. Nevertheless, I'm optimistic. For the first time since Camp David there is finally something to be hopeful about. I'm confident that the Labor government will seize this great moment and secure the democratic peace we've all prayed for these many years.

At a time like this it's easy for those of us on the Left to bask in our victory. While we have cause for celebration, let us not emulate the arrogance we all suffered first hand from the Israeli and American Jewish Right. They have seen everything they have placed their trust in repudiated by the very electorate they were confident would never desert them. Many are frightened by the possibilities offered by the future. Some conservative minded Jewish groups will take issue with Mr. Rabin's program, and this is something we should encourage. Our former detractors may be the catalyst for the creation of a more open and democratic Jewish community. In the meantime I'm personally thankful that the G-d of our ancient fathers and mothers brought me to see

How the Democrats can end welfare warfare



"Kaus may do for the Democrats of the 1990s what George Gilder, Jude Wanniski, and Charles Murray did for the Republicans of the 1980s."
—MICHAEL KINSLEY, co-host, CNN's "Crossfire"

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this turning point in the evolution of the Jewish state.

David L. Blatt
Chicago, Illinois

INTERMARRIAGE

To the Editor:

May I expand a bit on your very insightful piece on intermarriage by adding that almost two-thirds of American Jews who outmarry are male? For that reason, I see the high rates of intermarriage in America today as partly a feminist issue.

American Jewish men are frequently heard to say that they find Jewish women "too demanding." In other words, such men are shunning the accomplished, educated, independent, assertive Jewish woman in favor of what they perceive to be a more docile, compliant, delicate, "feminine" sort of partner, one who knows who is boss. This sounds to me like a deep-seated "anti-JAP" sexism on the part of Jewish men.

Such sexism is only further encouraged by recent endorsements of patrilineal determination of Jewishness. Recognition of Jewish patrilineal descent sends a clear (albeit false) message to today's Jewish men: It doesn't really matter whom you marry because your children will be Jewish anyway. So why bother dealing with the strength and the assertiveness of a Jewish woman?

Jewish women should insist on upholding our Torah tradition of matrilineal descent, which affirms the significance of the gestation period in the bonding of the Jewish soul to the body. Such a tradition gives women a subtle yet significant power within the community and makes a deep impact on children in their perceptions of their mothers. It also lets men know, too, that however important their self-image may be, they are not powerful enough to create Jewish children all by themselves. For this they need a Jewish woman, the sexist fantasies of some Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis notwithstanding. Perhaps standing firm on this issue will make a few more men think twice.

Finally, if we want our children to marry within the faith, the example we set must be based on doing *mitzvot*. Children who grow up keeping Shabbat, keeping kosher, guarding the holidays, and studying Torah outmarry far less than children whose parents have settled for a generation-bound, do-your-thing, "Oh, Wow" Judaism.

Nina Moliver
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Isn't the bottom line here that both Cowan and Perel really don't see any danger from intermarriage? I get their point that there are some real opportunities for the Jewish community, and that if we had a Judaism that could hold our own youth it would probably be a Judaism that would also appeal to the outsider, and eventually they too would want to convert not because of pressure but because of the beauty and compelling quality of Judaism. But there's something chauvinistic in this account. It tacitly assumes that there aren't equally compelling things in other people's religious and ethnic identities that could be an equal pull on the Jew in an intermarriage. Once you recognize the potentially powerful draws in other people's traditions, then how irrational is it to worry about intermarriage and to want to insist that Jews avoid it? If you start from the principle that our own tradition and heritage ought to be preserved, and that to do so in a world in which six million of us were killed this century requires some special attention, then why is it paranoid or misguided for Jews to set some rigid boundaries and to let their children know that it's important for us to "marry in"?

Harry Gross
New York, New York

FEMINIST INDIVIDUALISM

To the Editor:

Nancy Hewitt does a brilliant job of obscuring the force of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's argument ("Feminist Rights, Individualist Wrongs," *Tikkun,* May/June 1992) when she tells us that feminism has taken many different forms and can't be boiled down to one essence ("One Feminism Is Not Enough," *Tikkun,* May/June 1992). In response to Fox-Genovese's claim that feminists have significantly contributed to destroying the corporate power of the family, Hewitt says, "Whose version of the family?" The point, of course, is that there is no longer just one version of the family despite Quayle, Bush, Reagan, and the right-wing cultural offensive.

But this is too easy an escape. Of course we on the Left recognize the diversity of family forms. But as someone who was involved first in trying to construct an "alternative family form," and is now in a loving lesbian relationship, I can tell you that the problem Fox-Genovese raises remains central. Her point is that *any* relationship requires the giving up of some degree of autonomy and self-determination. Certainly we need to ensure that we don't get caught in what Peter Gabel once described at a *Tikkun* event I attended as "the tyranny of couples"—their attempts to force people to be dishonest

(Continued on p. 75)

Editorials

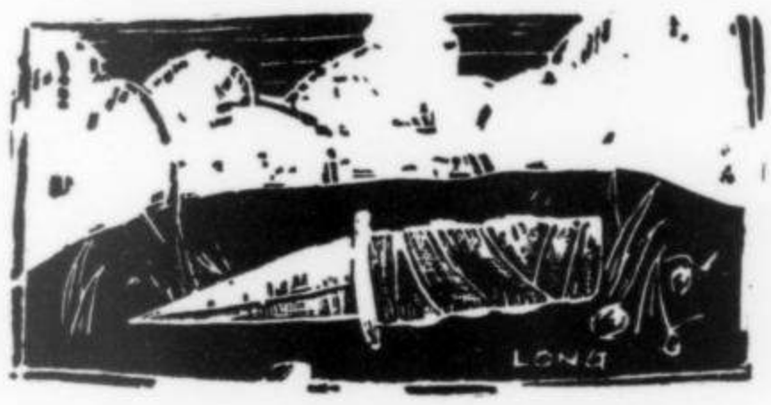
Michael Lerner

Ethnic Cleansing

Will this madness never stop?

We are outraged at the Serbian attempt to purge Bosnia of Moslems and Croats—and the murder and violence that has resulted. The disgusting record of the Croatian embrace of fascism and anti-Semitism during the Second World War, their relentless persecution of Jews, and the long history of Islamic oppression of Serbs and other minorities can never be a warrant for today's oppression of these groups. All sides have committed atrocities, all sides have convincing narratives to account for generations of antagonism. But the cycle of violence must be broken.

Jews are particularly incensed at the stories of concentration camps and of the attempts by Serbian nationalists to separate orphans and children into different ethnic groups so that the "bad" ethnic groupings can be removed. Our own history in Europe vividly reminds us of how we suffered a similar evil. Tragically, there are political parties in the State of Israel (like the Tzomet Party that Prime Minister Rabin sought to include in his government) that publicly proclaim their intention to do the same thing to the Arabs: to "transfer" them outside of Israel. The West Bank settlers, who continue to be romanticized by many American Jews, form the electoral backbone of these pro-transfer parties in Israel. Bosnia today gives us a preview of what might happen should these right-wingers in Israel ever come to power.



The continued ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia calls for immediate and decisive action from the world community. The United Nations ought to intervene massively and decisively to stop the bloodshed, just as it ought to intervene to stop the violence and starvation in Somalia. The principle of non-intervention, invoked by American leftists as a tactical move to slow America's propensity to intervene in the affairs of others to protect U.S. global interests, has no moral authority in situations like this. Nor does George Bush, fresh from sending half a million Americans to liberate the oilfields of Kuwait, sound convincing when he tells us that his reluctance to act derives from a desire to keep Americans "out of harms way." We would have supported intervention in the "internal affairs" of European countries to stop the persecution of the Jews, and in principle we support intervention now wherever the oppression of minorities wells up into overt campaigns of organized violence by state-supported armies or militias.

The Binding of Isaac

The point of the story is that Abraham didn't kill him. The revolutionary aspect of that event was what led our people to preserve the story and pass it on from generation to generation. But by the time it was passed down to Ezra (or whoever was the ultimate redactor of the Torah), it had been tamed, reframed, and made "religious" in a way that purposely obscured the revolutionary impact of the story.

The revolution that Judaism introduced to the world was this: the recognition that the ultimate power in the universe, the God who created and runs the world, is the power that makes possible transformation from what is to what ought to be. When Moses asks for God's name, what God tells him is this: "I shall be Whom I shall be—tell them that I Shall Be sent you."

Throughout human history there has been a chain of pain and oppression that has been passed from generation to generation. The repetition compulsion that dominates history is the tendency of one generation, recipients of oppression from the past, to act out on the next generation the pain that it experienced. The revolutionary perception of Judaism was that the chain could be broken, and to recognize as God the force that makes possible the breaking of the repetition compulsion.

And that's what the story of the binding of Isaac is about. Abraham is about to do what parents in every generation have done—to send their children to their deaths in order to placate the wrathful gods who seem to rule the universe. Indeed, attributing the necessity of pain to some god is a way of protecting oneself from a more troubling recognition: that the cruelty is *not* built into the structure of necessity. Rather, the pain, cruelty,

and oppression that we face in daily life is rooted in a vicious social order and is mediated through our first encountered agents of socialization: one's own somewhat deformed parents who, as victims of that social order, have become the vehicles for passing on to us the pain and oppression that keeps that larger order functioning. What makes Abraham the father of our people is that he is able to recognize that the voices of accumulated pain are *not* God, and that the real voice of God does *not* want him to sacrifice his child.

There's nothing in empirical reality, in the laws of psychology or sociology, that would lead us to predict that someone would come up with this recognition. The power that makes it possible for Abraham to see that the repetition compulsion can be broken is what we call God.

And that power could and should rule the universe. That's the point of Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish holiday in which we are encouraged to think of God as exercising dominion. What will that be like, when there is a real *tikkun olam,* a real healing of the world? It will be a time when we no longer feel stuck by our past or trapped by how we have been.

The promise of the High Holidays is that if we recognize that God really runs the world, then we simultaneously recognize that we are not stuck in our past, that the repetition compulsion can be broken, that we can radically remake ourselves to be whom we want to be and whom we ought to be. All the patterns can be broken and transformed. And that's why on Rosh HaShanah we read about Abraham, the father of our people precisely because he smashed the boundaries and constraints of the past. In the moment of recognizing Isaac not as a mere projection of his own fantasies and desires (the person through whom Abraham would become great and famous throughout history) and not as an object to be manipulated or sacrificed, but as another being—equally deserving of respect and equally created in the image of God—Abraham broke the cycle of pain and became the father of the Jewish revolutionary movement. The message of the Jewish movement, when not distorted or covered up, is that the world can and ought to be radically transformed and that we human beings are partners with God in bringing healing and repair.

The ten days from September 28 (Rosh HaShanah) to October 7 (Yom Kippur) is the time that we Jews can rethink our lives, abandon all the excuses we've given ourselves about why we and our world really can't embody our highest ideals. We can begin to plan in concrete detail what we will do to sustain the changes we should be making even in the face of the inevitable ways that the world will try to throw us back onto our old patterns and our old cynicism about anything being different. To believe in God is to believe that reality is such as to make possible (not inevitable) the realization of our highest ideals.

To all our readers, our best wishes for being able to use the High Holy Days in a creative and spiritually rich way, and for a year of peace, health, and abundant blessings.

Congratulations to Rabin: An Open Letter to Israel's New Prime Minister

It feels wonderful to be able to congratulate the State of Israel for its actions in the peace process rather than always having to be in the unenviable position of offering criticisms. So thank you, Mr. Rabin, for using your first few months in office to take some decisive steps toward peace.

In freezing the construction of new buildings on the West Bank, you made an important symbolic gesture. Palestinians rightly point out that the gesture does not go far enough since it allows the continued construction of some 7,000-8,000 structures already begun which may house up to 50,000 more settlers. Yet your limited freeze, coupled with the suspension of construction of new roads into the West Bank, should be seen as an important confidence-building gesture that ought to be met by a similar gesture from Arab states. We call upon them to suspend the Arab economic boycott of firms that do business with Israel.

In your meeting with Bush, Mr. Rabin, you showed your willingness to seriously pursue the path of peace in negotiations with Palestinians. TIKKUN has already pointed out that plans for limited autonomy cannot satisfy the legitimate desire of the Palestinian people for national self-determination, and hence could backfire if this is all you intend to offer in the long run. But if autonomy is truly meant as an interim stage in a process that will build confidence and undermine paranoia on both sides, it could be a useful first step toward granting the Palestinians the same rights to national self-determination that we Jews rightly insist on for ourselves. Here again we salute you for moving forward with the kind of determination and speed that characterized the early days of the State of Israel. You seem to recognize what is clear to every outside observer: that you will go down in history either as a person who tried to forestall the inevitable fulfillment of Palestinian rights, or as the person who took the decisive first steps toward Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

In the new climate the electoral victory of the peace forces helped create, we now believe that Congress should move quickly to provide loan guarantees to Israel that will help Soviet immigrants. Linking those loans to a settlement freeze proved extremely productive, and the linkage should remain. □

POLITICS 1992

Despite the obvious importance of the recession, the election of 1992 may well be determined by the degree to which Americans believe that one candidate or another understands the non-economic forms of pain in their lives—what we at Tikkun *call "the deprivation of meaning." Liberals remain baffled when they hear the Right appeal to "family values," because they believe that this is nothing but a code word designed to relegitimate oppressive patriarchal families. The Right may intend that, but other Americans are responding because of the real pain in their lives. To most Americans, "the family" is a code word for the crisis in their personal lives, and it unconsciously associates to issues like their feelings of loneliness and isolation, their recognition that it's increasingly difficult to sustain loving relationships, and their inchoate sense that their lack of fulfillment in work and in family life has something to do with a larger ethical and spiritual crisis of American society. To many Americans, it appears as if the liberals don't understand these concerns, and will only give their attention to them to the extent that they can be reduced to the language liberals understand—economic entitlements or political rights.*

Ironically, although most Americans care about economic and foreign policy issues, they don't have deeply developed theories about these matters, and so they tend to believe that the people who are "really talking sense" on economics or foreign policy are those who seem to make sense about the closer-to-home personal life issues. The "Platform for a Politics of Meaning" in the July/August issue of Tikkun *provided a framework to address these issues, but it remains to be seen whether liberals will use it as the campaign heats up in the coming weeks.*

Tikkun *does not endorse candidates for public office. But the issues raised by the campaign do concern many of our readers and are addressed in the section below by a variety of* Tikkun *writers.*

The Politics of Meaning Meets the Democrats

Michael Lerner

I was standing on the floor of the Democratic National Convention toward the end of Bill Clinton's acceptance speech, when a reporter from a major East Coast daily pushed his way through the hordes of delegates and media people to find me standing near the California delegation. "Some of Clinton's lines and some of Gore's lines seem so directly out of TIKKUN's July/August issue on the politics of meaning," he told me, "that you must be thinking that these guys have been doing some plagiarizing." The comment was followed up the next day by phone calls from another daily that wanted me to speculate on exactly who on the Clinton staff had been reading "The Politics of Meaning."

It was certainly true that the rhetoric of the politics of meaning was very much present at the convention. At the beginning of the week, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry ensured these ideas high visibility at the convention when he dedicated his entire nationally syndicated column to praising TIKKUN's platform for a politics of meaning and suggesting that in it lies the solution to many of the country's problems.

No wonder, then, that hundreds of delegates turned up at a TIKKUN seminar held at the Hilton the Wednesday morning of the convention to hear Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Marshal Meyer, David Twersky, and Clinton campaign representative (and former Carter White House advisor on domestic policy) Stuart Eizenstat debate Clinton's Israel policy and to hear Betty Friedan, Cornel West, Peter Gabel, U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone and me discuss TIKKUN's platform for a politics of meaning. And there were hundreds of media people and delegates who approached us at various points during the convention to thank us for what we were doing and for the ideas we were putting forward.

But while the Democrats seemed to be appropriating some of our rhetoric, the substance was largely absent. None of the ideas about how to build a society based on love and connection, a society in which the bottom line would not be profit and power but ethical and spiritual sensitivity and a sense of community, mutual caring, and responsibility, were actually endorsed by Clinton or Gore.

Michael Lerner is editor and publisher of Tikkun *and author of* Surplus Powerlessness *(Humanities Press, 1991) and* The Socialism of Fools *(Tikkun Books, 1992).*



Bill Clinton and Al Gore celebrate at the closing of the Democratic National Convention.

And it was precisely the point of our platform to show how one could move *beyond* the slogans and into the substance of building a society based on these principles.

What ensued inside me was a debate which, in other forms, was taking place among many liberals and progressives around the country.

My skeptical voice was saying things like: "This is precisely the *danger* of having developed a language of shared ideals—that opportunistic politicians who have no intention of changing the fundamentals of American society can nevertheless latch onto your ideals and cover their own policy equivocations with your idealistic language. Let's face reality: these guys are the people who formed the Democratic Leadership Council precisely to counter the impact of liberals and progressives in the party. If they now need the liberal wing of the party, they've done their best to signal to everyone else that they are going to be 'mainstreaming it' as much as possible once they take power. So it's ridiculous to think that these people share the moral and psychological sensibilities of the social change movements of the sixties—rather, they are the 'thirty something' version, the muzak version, of our generation."

The way the Clinton campaign positioned itself on Israel strengthened my skepticism. Clinton continues to criticize Bush for being too tough on Israel, citing the linkage of loan guarantees to a settlement freeze as a prime example. Yet most peace activists in Israel believe that it was precisely this linkage by the Bush Administration, forcing Israelis to choose between economic stability and territorial expansionism, that made possible the Rabin victory in June. But instead of identifying with the peace forces, Gore and Clinton have surrounded themselves with advisors who are linked to AIPAC.

Luckily for Clinton, most liberal Jews who may be critical of his approach to the Middle East don't vote solely on what's good for Israel, in part because we recognize that what's in the best interests of the Jewish people is not only a strong Israel (which an accommodation with the Palestinians would help secure) but also a world of peace, justice, and humane and ethical treatment of other people—and these concerns have traditionally guaranteed that most Jews vote Democratic. But Clinton should hope that Bush advisors are not clever enough to realize that this is one foreign policy issue where Clinton is both wrong and politically vulnerable.

"Is this mere political opportunism, or is Clinton genuinely misguided?" The same question arises when Clinton refuses to endorse troop withdrawal from Europe or Japan or major cuts in the defense budget. If he won't

raise taxes and won't cut the defense budget, how will he finance the domestic programs he promises? "Wouldn't it be better—and ultimately more politically savvy—to tell the truth about the need to restructure our economy, slash defense spending, and use that money both for investment and for education, ecology, health care, and job-creation?"

So that's my skeptical side.

My optimistic side says something like the following: "These guys are the most clever representatives of our own politics and of the spirit of the sixties. They've understood what we at TIKKUN have understood—that the old formulations of liberal politics are guaranteed losers, and rightly so, because they seemed to abandon the needs of the American majority and focus only on special interests and special needs. What is needed is a politics that can help most Americans see how their own interests and their own pain will be addressed, and only then will they *also* be able to hear the pain of others and to respond to their needs. Far from abandoning the poor, the homeless, working people, inner city Blacks, the struggle against racism, etc., the Clinton-Gore strategy is to serve these interests precisely by *not* putting them on the front burner.

"Similarly, you are being wildly unrealistic to expect that Clinton or Gore could actually endorse the visionary details of the platform for a politics of meaning. To talk about ridding health care of the profit motive or about a workplace that fosters creativity and cooperation or about an education system that teaches values like empathy would be to marginalize themselves at a point when the real task is to win power. What Clinton and Gore *have* done is to surround themselves with people who are smart and principled, and they've tried to signal to people like those in the TIKKUN community that we'll have access. And let's give them credit for being out there and explicit in their support of gay and lesbian rights, and for being unequivocal in their support for parental leave and abortion rights. On how many fronts do you expect them to be taking a vanguard position while still trying to run for office?"

For myself, I've started to hear inside me what I believe is a realistic alternative to both of these voices. I have no illusions that the Clinton-Gore "Clark Kent" will, once elected, reveal itself to be a politics of meaning "Superman" just waiting for the right opportunity to come out of a telephone booth. The same forces that make Clinton and Gore feel that it is opportune to play down substantial change during the election are likely to remain decisive in shaping the choices they make in the early years of their administration.

On the other hand, the dynamic of optimism and openness that they've elicited, the hopes for something substantially different, will act as forces that open up political possibilities far beyond what either Clinton or Gore may actually intend. Moreover, it is undeniable that these are two bright and decent human beings, and that they and others like them make accommodations to "reality" in part as a function of their resigned belief that nothing much can be changed and that they need to be realistic in order to survive politically. To the extent that the rest of us can build a social change movement that puts forward and is ready to fight for more visionary possibilities, both Clinton and Gore have the capacity to be moved by a deeper vision and to move beyond the world of narrow minded policy options that will likely surround them in the early years of their administration."

That's the "realistic" voice: not one that believes that Clinton will do it for us, but rather one which envisions that a Clinton-Gore administration will open up terrain on which liberals and progressives will have a chance to engage in battles that we might actually win. There will be a spirit of optimism and possibility sweeping America, and that will make it possible for liberals and progressives to present ideas that might otherwise be dismissed as utopian. If we are able to mobilize Americans around our vision, we will have a chance to change America—a chance that simply has not existed in the past twelve years *precisely* because the reigning ideas have been those of selfishness and self-interest. Ideas, rhetoric, and the language of hope and possibility, really do matter quite a bit.

There's a more pragmatic reason why Clinton should move beyond the rhetoric of the politics of meaning and actually start to understand the substantive idea. The lead Clinton holds in early September might diminish



considerably by mid-October, and at that point many voters are going to be asking themselves if Clinton can really deliver the kind of change that matters to *them*. Bush will be trying to persuade them that what Clinton is doing is merely reframing the same old liberal programs in a more appealing language—and he'll be trying to suggest that at the bottom the old-time liberalism is designed to help the poor but not help middle income people very much.

For example, they'll point out that although Clinton adopts the rhetoric of family values, when it comes down to it all he's really supporting is "family leave" and some other economic entitlements. True enough, many families will understand that these specific economic benefits really do matter to them—and that family life would be a lot easier if there were enough childcare and if work could more flexibly adjust to family demands. These are critical, and Clinton has wisely put these issues at the center of his campaign.

Nevertheless, most middle income people don't believe that these are central to what is causing their families to fall apart. They talk about issues like selfishness, narcissism, insensitivity, lack of commitment and responsibility to the needs of the other partner, irritability, irrational anger, depression, inability to communicate, feelings being blocked or inaccessible. And the Right sounds like it understands family life better when it talks about *these* issues and that gives it its plausibility to then go ahead and unfairly blame liberal values, reflected in the ethos of sex and pleasure for their own sake that emerged in the sixties and that still finds champions in the Left. It is probably too difficult in the context of an election to explain that pleasure can be achieved within the context of long term, committed relationships and need not be counterposed to family life. It's only the capitalist marketplace that isolates pleasure from the context of an ethically-grounded life and seeks to sell us pleasure as a commodity alienated from any larger framework of meaning, purpose, or love.

To respond to this most effectively, Clinton has to have *another* explanation of family crisis. We've offered that in the politics of meaning analysis—in this case, an analysis of the way that the competitive marketplace creates a selfishness and self-centeredness, and how oppressive workplaces generate depression and irrational anger that pops up in personal relationships and undermines family life.

Ironically, it is precisely the economic structures that the Right is committed to defending that are central to the crisis in family life. But Clinton would have to understand this kind of analysis and have it, and other parts of the politics of meaning, at the tip of his tongue and in the shaping of his advertisements if he is to be adequately protected from what may be a very effective Republican assault. At bottom, what this requires is presenting a politics that actually addresses the real sources of people's oppression, and not telling the old liberal story that is really a false story: namely, that it's all a question of providing adequate economic benefits. The central point of the politics of meaning is that people have deeper ethical, spiritual, and psychological needs that should not be counterposed to the economic arena, but which must also be addressed. Clinton's ability to succeed—probably in the campaign but certainly in his presidency—will depend on the degree to which he really understands those needs not just as a crowd pleaser but as the center of a new politics. □

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Running from Race

Gary Peller and Kimberlé Crenshaw

We went to the Democratic convention to see the unveiling of what was hailed as the New Democratic Party. This much heralded change in direction was the product of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which sought to map out a new strategy to win back the White House in 1992 based on its analysis of what went wrong in the last two presidential elections. Statistically, the electoral losses in those years were the result of a large scale white-flight. Symbolically, these defections were attributed to perceptions that the Democrats had become a party of "special interests," a code way of indicating a fear that the Democratic Party had become the home of minority interests. The central problem facing the party for 1992 was how to bring whites back into the fold while retaining the loyalty of Blacks and other "identity" groups who seemed to alienate so many other voters.

That this was to be the tactical focus of the party was clear even before the convention. As the leader of the Rainbow Coalition, Jesse Jackson was taken to represent precisely the kind of special interest from which the party needed to disassociate itself. In order to inoculate Clinton's candidacy against the "Willie Horton-izing" of the 1988 Bush campaign, analysts warned that Clinton would have to avoid the appearance of pandering to Jackson, a problem identified as a central failing of the 1988 Dukakis convention. In a preemptive strike, Clinton assumed an aggressive posture by "standing up" to Jackson through his attack on Sister Souljah at the Rainbow Convention.

Despite concerns about special interests, Blacks and women were highly visible and active in leadership positions at the convention. But it was clear that, although the mass of delegates appeared to be to the left of the DLC's "centrism," most (except Jerry Brown's) were willing to accept something less than their ideal candidate and their preferred political rhetoric in order to gain the White House. Many progressives were talking in realpolitik terms, agreeing with the need to reject special interest politics in favor of broader appeals. They saw in Clinton's centrist posturing a hopeful scenario, one in which the party's approach was "just strategic" in order to get elected and hoped that, once in office, Clinton would support progressive programs. From this perspective, the image of a coalition among various special interests had to be replaced with more universal, transcendent appeals, hence the broad-based, "neutral" appeal to "economic empowerment" and the general move away from the special interests implicitly bound up in "social" or "cultural" issues.

With respect to race, the basic message of this approach appeared to be twofold. First, the specific articulation of race issues as well as any discussion of the particular situation of African Americans would be suppressed in order to avoid alienating potential white supporters. Instead, Blacks, the party's core constituency, were expected to understand that their interests were tacitly represented under the rubric of more general and universal appeals. The convention was like a shell game: when we say economic empowerment, understand that we mean to include the rebuilding of Black neighborhoods and business life; when we make commitments to help children in trouble, understand that we mean the desperate situation of Black urban youth. But understand also that explicit racial discourse is taboo. Second, to the extent that race was mentioned at all, it was done in a way that portrayed Blacks and whites as being equally potential victims of racism; the real world unequal relationship between Blacks and whites was replaced with an image of mutual vulnerability, thus giving whites an anti-racist plank.

With the exception of Jesse Jackson, Blacks at the convention appeared willing to play along with this shell game. It was striking, for instance, that Ron Brown, who four years earlier was the convention organizer for Jackson himself, gave a speech that was silent on the issues of Blacks or civil rights. And Barbara Jordan, sixteen years ago the dramatic symbol of racial inclusion in the Democratic Party,

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Kimberlé Crenshaw is a professor of law at UCLA and a leading writer on critical race theory and Black feminism.

took pains to talk of race solely in symmetrical terms: "We seek to unite people and not divide them and we reject both white racism and Black racism."

But it wasn't just the official rhetoric flowing from the podium that embodied this shell game. The numerous Black delegates (many of whom were brought into party roles by Jesse Jackson) were noticeably on "good behavior." During a year in which the entire nation witnessed ruthless acts of racist police brutality, the massive venting of despair and rage in Los Angeles, and the cynical embrace of Black neoconservatism symbolized by the Clarence Thomas nomination, Blacks at the convention made no noise about the racism fostered by the Bush administration; nor did they attempt to embody a differentiated cultural presence. One of the ironies of the substantial representation of African Americans at this convention was that the cost of inclusion seemed to be the suppression of anything like a Black agenda for change or a Black cultural presence.

This neutralizing of racial identification stood in sharp contrast to the almost routine assertion of women's difference at the convention. By pointedly celebrating the increasing presence of women in the national political arena, the Democrats effectively capitalized on the public outrage generated by the Thomas/Hill affair, the imminent threat to choice being played out in the Supreme Court, and the groundswell of support for changes in gender roles.

This prominent embrace of women's difference, especially during a year in which racial particularity has been shunted aside in favor of universal values, confirmed our initial impression that the discourse of "special interest" was really about race. The moratorium on race was maintained even within the celebration of gender differences. The party played to the women's vote as though it were an undifferentiated mass that could be mobilized by the simple assertion of difference, or by waving the banner of choice. But in failing to recognize that gender issues arise within race– and class-specific contexts, the party lost touch with a substantial constituency. Masses of poor and working women—people whom the party needs to mobilize in order to win—were equally if not more likely to identify with Jackson's recounting of the tragic death of working women at the North Carolina chicken-packing plant than with the slickly professional brand of feminism represented by Ferraro or Feinstein. This almost obsessive focus on suppressing race and class as a way of winning back alienated whites may in the end undermine the strategic potential that the women's vote represents.

We agree that the exigencies of political victory require changes in the perception that the Democratic Party represents only special interests. But we think that the shell-game strategy which we have described is, at least in the long run, self-defeating. It is true that part of the reality of the contemporary American political scene is that policies identified with Black interests will be rejected by the mass of voters. But history has shown that the allure of the shell game is ephemeral at best. Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, for example, can be understood as having been a way to help further a Black agenda by articulating Black interests in race-neutral terms. But once the War on Poverty became associated with benefits for Blacks, Nixon was able to exploit the implicit race issues and appeal to the "silent majority." To the extent that Clinton is engaged in that kind of shell game, we think the results will be similar—if not in this election, then in the long term.

But there are pragmatic alternatives for addressing the negative perceptions associated with special interests which would not require the kind of unseemly suppression of cultural and political particularity that we saw at the convention.

The dominant critique of special interest politics embraced by the DLC is that special favors are being dispensed to groups in exchange for electoral victory. According to this critique, white voters who left the Democratic Party over the last fifteen years did so because they resented the special treatment given to Blacks, and no longer felt that the party spoke to them in any meaningful way.

For some of the these white voters, the term "special interests" is quite simply a code word for Blacks, and they are hostile to the Democratic Party because of the influence Blacks have within it. But for others, the problem is not so much out-and-out racism as a feeling of being betrayed by the the civil rights movement itself. These people may even have been moved by the moral authority of the early civil rights rhetoric, have accepted the dictum that it is wrong to treat Blacks worse than whites, and have come to believe that justice requires public neutrality toward race, religion, and ethnicity. The subsequent assertions of Black difference and particularity, embodied for example in the public discourse about affirmative action, thus betrayed what they thought the civil rights movement was all about. They are resentful, in part, because they feel misled. And the only arguments they've heard to justify special treatment for Blacks all seem to explain the problems of Blacks in terms of the consequences of white racism, a racism that they don't understand and resent being accused of.

One way to address this resentment is to press the kind of universalist discourse that the Democrats are pursuing—Blacks will now be denied their particularity

and be required to conform to the same universal community in which all other Americans live. But there is an alternative to the universalist approach.

This alternative is to embrace particularity rather than to suppress it, and thereby to begin to articulate the ways in which not only Blacks, but also great numbers of whites, have been wrongly disempowered by the requirement that they conform to a public culture that is presented as neutral, but is in reality thick with cultural significance. Racial identity is not the only basis upon which people's cultural lives are suppressed in mainstream institutional life. For white Americans as well as Black feel that their cultural identity is not fully reflected in their workplaces, their schools, or their community life generally; this experience of cultural estrangement is a persistent source of white alienation. And yet, the images of color-blind universalism which arose out of an earlier conception of racial liberation held the implicit message that this suppression of "private" cultural identity was to be the price of social justice. Whites who have paid this price are understandably miffed that the Democrats seem to think that Blacks don't have to as well. But rather than finding the solution in a suppression of Black identity, as seems to have been pursued at the Democratic convention, a progressive agenda with long-term transformative potential must articulate the way in which the discourse of public neutrality and impersonality has been a sham, a legitimating ideology that served to make the exercise of a particular kind of cultural power seem like it wasn't power at all.

The long-range strategy for cultural transformation on issues of race will eventually require addressing this issue. The basic reason is that so-called universalism is simply not an option. As Jesse Jackson effectively argued at the convention's Rainbow Caucus, moving to the supposedly race-neutral discourse of economic empowerment can't transcend race, because race is implicated in economic life, in the practice of neighborhood redlining, in the obstacles that Black business people face getting loans, and in the whole general flow of capital investment decisions, of what to fund and what not to fund with government and "private" money.

And as Jackson argued, the rejection of special interests is not a fraud. Like the false neutrality of school admission and job selection criteria, the rejection of special interests as articulated by Clinton falsely poses a kind of universalism that speaks neither to Blacks nor to the masses of whites who are also alienated from the social institutions in which they find themselves. The long-range appeal that can win elections, without requiring the kind of self-negation which marked Black participation in the Democratic convention, can be transcendent—but not in the sense of the false presentation of our existing public culture as neutral or universal. Rather, it must be transcendent in the sense of making our institutions reflect rather than repress our cultural identities.



Cornel West speaks at the TIKKUN *forum on the Politics of Meaning at the Democratic National Convention*

From our perspective it's not only the DLC that has engaged in the kind of universal appeals that abandon the cultural particularity of Blacks and others. TIKKUN magazine also held a caucus at the convention to which progressive delegates were invited to discuss the kind of "politics of meaning" that has been presented in these pages. Perhaps we represent a minority faction within the TIKKUN readership, but we found the TIKKUN discourse itself problematic for some of the same reasons for which we are concerned about the Clinton rhetoric. To be sure, Michael Lerner and Peter Gabel presented a diagnosis of the failures of traditional progressive politics that in many ways resonated with us. They are right that an exclusive emphasis on individual rights and the distribution of economic benefits has alienated many Americans because it fails to speak to deeper longings for connection and confirmation that people have. And they're on target when they describe how the right wing has successfully exploited this social need through the false imagery of human connection—symbolized by, say, the embrace of the flag or the construction of fantasy images of the fetus and the family. And they are right that progressives have lost the trust of regular Americans because we have too often exhibited a righteous disdain for the concerns of those not on the front line of cultural transformation.

But TIKKUN's emphasis on the transcendent interests we all share in receiving recognition and confirmation and in being part of a community of "meaning" seems

to us also to bypass serious engagement with the racial and cultural dynamics of American social life. Part of this is obvious in the rhetoric itself; the move from the narrow focus on public policy to the level of the existential does deepen the analysis, but it also presents an implicit description of the social world that depoliticizes what's going on, that is, that speaks as if we all share a universal interest in overcoming alienation that is somehow separate from our positions in the social world. The TIKKUN rhetoric simply moves much too quickly from the social to the existential plane without really confronting the concrete and particular ways that racial conflict is encoded in our institutional lives.

Despite various problems that it encountered, Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign exemplified many of the strategies we recommend. And so did his presence at the 1992 convention. Jackson's highly textured appreciation of difference and his understanding of the diverse forms of alienation in American life are potential foundations for broad appeal, hindered only by his race. Were Clinton to run a campaign based on similar sensibilities, he could not only win but also build a truly new progressive movement.

The Democratic Party has within itself the potential to realize progressive goals, and at the same time, to regain the trust and loyalty of white voters. But this cannot be accomplished through the alienating suppression of what is adamantly there—the culturally variegated and politically identified special interests, including white voters, who together make up the Democratic Party electorate. The Democratic leadership should be mobilizing rather than suppressing difference, both as a matter of political expediency and social realization. □

Ending Coercive Deference

Peter Gabel's Response to Crenshaw and Peller

Kim Crenshaw and Gary Peller, though right on many points, miss the central positive aspect of the Democratic Party's convention: the attempt by Democrats to liberate themselves from a hopeless and paralyzing political situation.

The Democratic Party in the 1980s and early nineties was a collection of the residues of formerly vibrant social movements—civil rights, civil liberties, labor, the countercultural impulses of the sixties—which at their height projected visions with potentially universal appeal. Although these movements made a great impact on the societies of their time, the transformative elements in their vision were often defeated, and the energy that they originally generated became lost in a maze of narrowly framed struggles for rights or benefits. As people lost confidence in their larger transformative vision, they allowed these movements to become reified interest groups, pushing an "outside authority" to make "concessions" rather than seeking to fundamentally remake a social order in accord with their own highest ideals. As these movements decreased in vision, excitement, and energy, they were increasingly prone to project an image of powerlessness, anger, and bitterness. Instead of inspiring hope for a new order from which everyone could benefit, they increasingly demanded deferential recognition of how oppressed they were within the existing order, seeking to elicit guilt from the majority as the basis upon which they could receive political support for their programs.

Liberal Democrats were put into an impossible position. On the one hand, they quite correctly identified with what was best in the aspirations of these social change movements and fought against entrenched Democratic Party interests to include these movements and to have the party articulate their concerns. On the other hand, these movements that liberals were seeking to support had already become ossified and guilt-inducing, so that being identified with them meant succumbing to a discourse that prevented many liberals and progressives from raising critical questions or articulating concerns that more authentically reflected their own truths. A labor movement that denounced demands for workers' control as potentially communistic or a Black liberation movement that insisted that all whites see themselves as oppressors put many people in the position of having to advocate a politics that simultaneously denigrated who they were and prohibited them from speaking the truth as they saw it. The final turn of the screw occurred when those who deferred to oppressed groups were denounced for being "guilty white liberals," thus making them hate themselves for the very deference that the oppressed groups demanded.

The dynamic that emerged both in the Left and in the Democratic Party was something like this: Because the

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oppressed groups demanded deference on the basis of their oppression, others were forced to accept demands and ways of presenting themselves that they knew were guaranteed to lose and required inauthentic behavior. This dynamic generated a secret anger which, in its worst forms, led former liberals to embrace the racism or anti-worker sentiments of the Right. But for those who remained within the Left and the Democratic Party, these contradictions led to a passivity and a resigned acceptance of powerlessness.

Clinton and Gore may have changed this. It was very important for Clinton to stand up to Sister Souljah's comments about killing white people. By taking the risk of breaking the guilt-relation of deference that was paralyzing the liberal world, he may have freed up the energy for many decent whites to support Blacks once again without feeling that they have to deny their own reality by doing so.

Rather than see Clinton as moving the Democratic Party to the center, it would be more accurate to see him as breaking the hopeless interest group formula that has come to be identified with the Left and which has paralyzed the party. But this does not necessarily entail an abandonment of the transformative elements in the Left's position. On the contrary, being freed from the formal orthodoxy of the Democratic Party's left may now create the possibility of adopting the substance of a left vision.

Clinton and Gore are far better than the older generation of liberal Democrats who ritually deferred to the interest groups and who were locked into the New Deal model of "rights-distribution." Behind their conventional veneers, an unquenched life force does shine through, shaped in part by the openness, psychological sensitivity, and taste of liberatory possibilities that existed in the 60s. Part of the reason they may have a chance to win is that they have allowed the 60s generation to reemerge from hiding without feeling they are going to be beaten over the head by PC interest groups.

It is painful to listen to Clinton talk in ways that fail to mention unions or the particularity of the oppression of African Americans, because in so doing he seems to be obliterating not only an important part of American history but also truths that we know are important for understanding how to transform our society. But he may be half-consciously navigating a necessary symbolic break in order to dissolve the dysfunctional dynamic that has paralyzed the Democrats and the Left.

A more productive left reaction than Crenshaw and Peller's would be to go with the opening that Clinton and Gore are creating in a previously impacted mass political consciousness. In fact, this opening contains significantly more empathy for the struggle of Blacks, women, and gays, and much more sensitivity to the environment than any of the older generations of politicians, no matter how much they were willing to give verbal obeisance to the collection of oppressed groups.

I know that Clinton and Gore could also go in a conservative direction and create a yuppie/pop psychology oligarchy that would be the antithesis of the spirit of the 60s. But this outcome is not inevitable. To the extent that we remain tied to a form of politics that embodies coercive deference, we may be limiting how effectively we can position ourselves to engage in the inevitable struggles that will emerge as our generation comes to power. □

Perot's Legacy

Adam Shatz

Ross Perot's decision to drop out of the presidential race closed one of the most provocative chapters in American electoral history, yet the mainstream American press seemed incapable of discussing the demise of the billionaire Texan's campaign except in terms of its immediate relevance to the electoral fortunes of George Bush and Bill Clinton. Although it's unrealistic to expect anything more from journalists, whose agenda is set by polls measuring the minute-by-minute fluctuations of the country's political temperature, there is also substantial cause for our concern, as the depthless treatment of Perot's departure is already threatening to make the meaning of his campaign recede inexorably from public memory. One can only hope that the unsavory Bonapartist features of the Perot campaign will not lead progressives seeking a way out of the two-party monopoly to overlook its significance to the future of leftist politics in America.

For Great Society liberals, the Reagan-Bush years

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were a period of political impotence and public discredit. Right wing efforts to dismantle the welfare state were eroding not only the more egalitarian features of American government but also the popular desire to preserve those institutions (public education, Head Start, etc.) that promoted the common welfare. The disastrous effects of the Reagan years were acutely registered in 1988, when an alarming majority (51 percent) of eligible voters did not participate in the presidential election, thereby enabling a mere fraction of them to elect our current President. It was a bitter paradox that most Americans were in effect *boycotting* (out of indifference and/or anger) the very system of free elections which their government touted as the hallmark of a humane society and pledged to export wherever its ideological antagonists happened to be in power.

With four more years of Reaganism to look forward to, liberals could only pray that the Republican grip on the country's political center was finite and that the famous pendulum theorized by Arthur Schlesinger would in due time swing their way again. Meanwhile, they struggled to understand, as the title of E.J. Dionne's recent book memorably put it, "why Americans hate politics," and how their investment in the political process might be revitalized and their faith in participation restored. The bleak alternative was yet more apathy and a sporadic resort to those *other* forms of participation (riots, protests, etc.) that had punctuated the previous crisis of democracy in the late 1960s—except, as the rebellion in Los Angeles was later to demonstrate tragically, no longer would political defiance project a redemptive vision for reordering social priorities.

For leftists the Reagan-Bush years were particularly frustrating. Even though the insurmountable tension between economic equality and social justice on the one hand and unbridled market freedom on the other was now fully exposed for everyone to see, there was no corresponding upsurge of leftist sentiment in the American public. Increasingly skeptical about their power to ignite and expand the mass American political imagination, many on the Left began to focus their attention on local issues and Third World liberation struggles at the expense of developing a plausible strategy to shape national politics.

It was in this historic juncture in American politics that the insurgent presidential candidate Ross Perot emerged, riding on a crest of support from volunteers—only to surrender before the election even got started, betraying his followers and reinforcing their sense of disenfranchisement.

Read against the backdrop of America's economic decline and widespread cultural malaise, Ross Perot's surrender speech seemed almost designed to effect the transformation of the two-party system from a corrupt, unpopular bulwark against the participation of outsiders into a protector of a presidential election "by and for the people" that a three-way race might have undermined by handing ultimate decision making power to the House of Representatives.

The mantle of change thus passed magically from Perot, who was thereafter widely portrayed as a coward, to the consummate insider Bill Clinton, now battling Bush in a classic man-to-man race. A better way to illustrate the folly of anti-systemic efforts and to return Americans to the voting booths could not have been conceived.

Though the Left quite reasonably welcomed the demise of the Perot candidacy, it failed to address the profound democratic desires for expanded participation to which Perot's platform spoke. The failure of the Left to take Perot and his supporters seriously, the concentration on Perot's alleged fascism, was nowhere more evident than in the debate over Perot's electronic town hall, the controversial proposal that crystallized Perot's image as a populist autocrat. Most critics of the electronic town hall proposal never mentioned what no doubt frightened them most: the fact that Perot's hall would rob opinion-making experts of their privileged status. The startling possibilities of mass-mediated manipulation which the town hall would have introduced played right into the hands of Perot's opponents across the political spectrum.

Ours is a culture saturated with official experts, and the dissemination of their knowledge through television and radio has produced a large population of self-styled popular experts who can claim to know more than a thing or two about the traumas of broken families, the arms buildup in the Middle East, or the controversies in the world of rap. Their "knowledge" does not often diverge appreciably from that of the official experts, of which it is generally a fragmented version; therefore it is unlikely that Perot's town hall would have yielded significantly different policies on, say, American intervention in Iraq. But as an acknowledgment, albeit flawed, of popular knowledge and of the desire for expanded political empowerment, the electronic town hall was a serious proposal to usurp the power of official experts to whom the distribution of social knowledge has been assigned.

Rather than respond to the challenge of expanding direct democracy which the electronic town hall proposal strikingly posed, Perot's liberal critics marshalled its specific dangers as evidence that greater popular participation in policy-making could only open up a new and more terrible mode of mass domination. For many liberals there could be no middle ground between the Reason of representative democracy and the Mob of Perot's electronic town hall.

Those of us the on Left would have been wise to take up and reformulate Perot's radical call for a public reappropriation of knowledge. Our failure to address a proposal that was in many ways consonant with the writings of radical American political theorists on the uses of electronic technology in extending popular participation speaks volumes about a movement that prefers to stand on the sidelines of vital public policy debates. As a result, Americans did not hear our proposals for workplace democracy, cooperatives, home-voting, and popular forums in which foreign and domestic policy principles could be discussed and determined collectively. How do we expect to advance the goals of the Left for participatory democracy if we keep our proposals to ourselves as though they were private reassurances of our superior vision and morality?

The Democratic Party has succeeded in transferring (and thereby temporarily pacifying) the frighteningly boisterous spirit of the Perot movement to an internal agent of change in the person of Bill Clinton. However, the full repercussions of Perot's departure have yet to be felt. The spirit of insurgency and the desire for expanded participation will not so easily vanish as long as the constituencies that Perot (and of course Jesse Jackson and Jerry Brown) mobilized are not abandoned. It is up to the Left, which has a deep emotional and political investment in expanding democracy, to make sure that these constituencies' concerns continue to find expression in American politics. □

The Ethics of Voting Jewish in 1992

Marc Gopin

It is not unreasonable for Jews to have as a serious part of their consideration when they vote the question of what is good for the Jews or what is good for the state of Israel. A sizable number of Jewish religious laws and ethical principles inculcate a deep concern with the survival and physical safety of oneself, one's family, and the Jewish people. But two caveats are necessary.

One, it is not always clear what "good for the Jewish people" or "good for the State of Israel" means in any given period. The debate between conservative and progressive forces in the Jewish community centers on this very question. Conservatives tend to believe that Israel needs all of the West Bank and Gaza to guarantee its security and therefore define "good for the state of Israel" in terms of policies that will support those Israelis who wish to hold on to that land. Progressives tend to believe that Israel's true security can be obtained through direct peace negotiations with Palestinians and other Arabs, a process that ultimately grants Palestinians self-determination in the disputed territories in exchange for Arab normalization of relations with Israel. Some appropriate the label "pro-Israel" for candidates who share their own view of how to enhance Israel's security, but it might be equally reasonable for a progressive Jewish position to insist that a candidate who seeks to encourage negotiation rather than confrontation, or who opposes the endless spiral of military escalation in the Middle East, might be the true "pro-Israel" candidate.

Two, Jewish consciousness cannot concern only what is good for Jews. If Jewish voting begins and ends with the question of self-interest, even enlightened self-interest, it would be a gross distortion of Judaism and Jewish values, a deification of the Jewish people as the sole and ultimate object of value, which is, I suggest, a form of idolatry.

Faith in a divine presence, both immanent and transcendent, is an affirmation of humility before something other than oneself or one's national group. I believe that Judaism requires Jews to make a commitment to a divine path of justice and righteousness (Genesis 18.19). And the Prophets suggest that the true path to God is not through physical might or intelligence, the typical preoccupations of humanity, but through the practice of compassion, justice, and righteousness (Jeremiah 9.23). This is the essential moral mandate of Jewish peoplehood.

Our task as Jews, then, is to hold both these principles in our hearts at the same time—to be committed both to the interests of the Jewish people and to the call of the Divine, which is a call for justice and compassion. The ability to maintain a balance between our particularist needs and our universal commitments to a just and compassionate world—therein lies the key to voting Jewish. This is the supreme political mitzvah: to discover the way to combine the needs of the particular and the needs of the universal.

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A fully Jewish vote is a vote to perpetuate the spiritual mandate of Torah and not just the physical safety of the Jewish people. A Jewish vote is a vote that expresses a commitment to seeking peace, justice, and compassion. It is a mistake to imagine that voting to heal the ills of the world is somehow to ignore one's Jewishness, or to lose oneself in Enlightenment values at the expense of Jewish tradition. On the contrary, to the extent that Jews become involved in the struggle to perfect the world, they are in fact perfecting a spiritual national mandate. For example, many Jews in the last thirty years have been involved in various efforts to achieve peace between nations or ethnic groups. This is a clear fulfillment of the literally hundreds of biblical and rabbinic mandates to seek peace and discover creative ways to resolve conflict. Whether it be Exodus 23.4's instruction on aiding even an enemy in distress, or whether it be midrashic descriptions of Aaron the High Priest's strategies of diffusing conflict nonviolently (Avot R. Nathan 12[A], 24[B]), the fact is that Jewish tradition is committed in prayer and practice to avoiding conflict and to not celebrating the dubious glories of warfare (Psalms 147.10; 20.8).

Applying the principle of compassion or justice does not always lead to a straightforward outcome as to which candidate to support; these are complicated matters. Nor can we rely merely on what a candidate *says*. Although political rhetoric is not unimportant in shaping a set of expectations and educating the society to a certain set of values, we need to see how a candidate's general pronouncements translate into policies that affect us all. But to make these judgments as a Jew requires that we take seriously how the candidate will affect everyone, universally, in addition to how his or her tenure will affect the Jewish people.

I suspect that I am not the only Jew who grapples with at least two inner voices, one very ethnic and ancient, another very prophetic and ancient; one that asks, "Whither my people's body?" and one that asks, "Whither my people's soul?" I suspect also that I am not the only one who looks in the mirror and sees a child of Adam and Eve as well as a child of Abraham and Sarah. What a wondrous and daunting sight. If I see only Adam and Eve, then I disappear from the mirror, as a phantom. And if I see only Abraham and Sarah, then I, my true "I," also disappears. But if I manage to see them all at once, then, well, the image seems to reflect much more than just me, though just what, I am not sure. Perhaps shades of Eternal Presence. □

Larry Agran on Clinton's Dilemma

Bill Clinton promised to be the agent of change—to put people back to work, to rebuild our cities and towns and neighborhoods, to improve our schools, to reform our health care system, to clean up the environment, and to reduce the annual federal deficit. Who could disagree? But there are only two ways to pay for them: raising taxes sharply, and not just on the rich; or cutting military spending quickly and deeply now that the Cold War is over.

No one is going to propose sharp increases in federal taxes in 1992. But George Bush and Bill Clinton are in substantial agreement that the nearly $300 billion per year military budget should be cut by about one-third—over a very gradual five-year period. And that's not enough.

So complete has been Democratic Party complicity in the Cold War that the Clinton-Gore ticket is unprepared, even now, to shape new and popular post-Cold War priorities. The Democratic nominees ought to ask the American people for a mandate to cut the military budget by asking them the following:

What's more important? Having troops in Europe at the cost of over $100 billion a year, or providing health care and putting millions of Americans to work rebuilding our cities? What's more important? Building B2 bombers and huge new warships, or using these funds to build a modern railroad system and other mass transportation aimed at ending our dependence on foreign oil? What's more important? Giving billions of dollars in lethal weapons every year to foreign dictators, or providing food, medicine, and genuine humanitarian assistance to people struggling to build their own democracies?

The plain truth is that Democratic Party candidates in 1992 who are still endorsing Cold War military budgets will be weak on urban policy, education, jobs, environmental protection, and deficit reduction—because unless they generate a mandate for military cuts now they won't have the money to accomplish these goals should they be elected. □

Larry Agran, former mayor of Irvine, California, was a candidate for president in the Democratic Party primaries this spring. This is an excerpt from a longer piece by Agran on the legacy of the Cold War for the Democratic Party.

Brooklyn Through My Window

In memory of Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum

1.
I live in a Chagall painting
everything is floating nothing is nailed
    down
Brooklyn through my window
Crown Heights through my window
cars are lurching above rooftops
above pigeons above TV antennae
cars are knocking into each other flying
    crippled through the air
laws of gravity are suspended
poles are yanked out of the tent

Children are screaming their cries are
    bright red
policemen are flying bicycle wheels
    twisted metal
people are pouring into the streets their
    faces distorted
people are reaching for weapons
or calling up radio talk shows
opinions are flying and rumors and rage
cab drivers are steering their craft into
    the sky.

2.
Look at the picture long enough
and it will start to make sense
said my father, who brought me magic
    tricks from Chicago:
boxes with secret compartments
egg cups with hidden eggs
sly drawings where faces melt into each
    other.
Stare long enough, he advised, and
    everything will stop moving.

In this picture someone is being
    crucified
on a Brooklyn telephone pole. Is he a
    child? Is his skin light
    or dark?
Why does he keep changing into a man
    with a beard
and a black suit and a shaft of glass in his
    heart?

I don't say "pogrom" aloud.
I don't want to hurt your feelings,
or breathe more life into these fires
(they have claimed so much of our
    territory).
But the pores of my skin
know what they know.

This is a letter to you
whom I don't know
for we've never talked
though you've shared a seat on the D-
    train
or taken my Comp. 101 class
or written a poem I copy and hang on my
    wall.

3.
In my fantasy,
everyone gets together
and nails down the world
makes workable streets and apartments
plants community gardens
holds joint block parties with klesmer
    music and rap and rock and show
    tunes
and poetry readings featuring Amiri
    Baraka and Allen Ginsberg
and feasts of fried chicken and potato
    blintzes
and great communal bonfires
where we all toast marshmallows.

That's my fantasy.
But I don't live there.
I live in a Chagall painting:
Brooklyn through my window
Crown Heights through my window.
Voices rise
like smoke
from ghosts of fires—
burning villages

in Africa in Europe.

My reality
feels different from yours—
sounds different tastes different on the
    tongue
the colors, yes, are different
I'm afraid to describe yours
to make the attempt.
What if I fail get the words wrong the
    jokes?
Will you laugh at me
turn away in steel contempt
or cut my tongue out?

My reality
feels similar to yours—
we want the same things:
safety food love the chance to be
    wonderful.
We fear the same things:
madness sterility the knock at the door
the child's face contorted with pain
the match tossed into the bedclothes.

4.
I live in a Chagall painting.
But you do not.
Chagall, of course, didn't either.
He lived in Vitebsk, a real place
he had to get out of.
Then, later, Paris
and High Falls, New York:
a red house
in an old photograph.

High Falls through his window:
quiet mountains glassy streams slow-
    chewing cows
a church with a high steeple
an image on a Christmas card.

(No synagogue in High Falls.
The few Jews met downtown over a
    store.
Sometimes they called on Chagall, they
    needed him for a minyan.
I've heard he never refused.)

Father Divine lived in High Falls too,
    with his followers.
He was popular with the neighbors.
Old timers still talk about all his
    houses—
such pretty colors, they say.

Is there a message here?
Or just a story?

5.
Like Marc Chagall and Father Divine,
I have a house in High Falls.
I float there cool green summers—
a swimmer in soothing waters.
But I live in Brooklyn
uneasily the way I live in my skin.
And Brooklyn is exploding.
Pieces of Crown Heights beat against
    my window
like hailstones, like pellets of steel.
Brooklyn is breaking down into
    fragments
splintering crushed windshield glass a
    shattered storefront pane.
Brooklyn is no longer the sum of its
    parts.

Everything can be explained, says my
    father
(that lone ghost still haunting my mind
like the specter that once haunted
    Europe),
everything is connected, yes, really.
There are no secret compartments.

Once you look closely at the picture
things will stop moving and you'll see
that all the faces are really the same
    face.

Enid Dame

We invite you to use this as a supplement to (not a replacement for) the traditional confessional prayer "Al Cheyt" recited on Yom Kippur, and to get members of your community to spend time together before or during the services to discuss this supplement and add to it your own ideas and concerns. The "sins" need not be those of you or your friends—the whole idea of a collective confessional is that we are inextricably linked and hence must take responsibility for the entire community and our entire people. But the motivation in asking you to get your community involved in either discussing this version or writing its own is to assist those who want to ensure that the spiritually serious nature of the High Holidays does not get lost in a rote recitation of prayers that only express the sensibilities of a different historical period.

על חטא FOR OUR SINS

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

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

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves or our community all that we ought to be, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to acting differently this coming year.

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

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

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

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

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our own spiritual development;

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

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

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

And for the sins of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world, most notably this year in Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia, and Haiti;

For the sins of participating in a racist society and not dedicating more energy to fighting racism—or even pretending that the problem had gone away until others began to burn down cities in their despair;

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

For the sins of not doing enough to save the environment;

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

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

And for the sins of allowing our society to give low priority to the fight against AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's, and other diseases, while squandering hundreds of billions of dollars on unnecessary defense expenditures;

For the sins of passing moral judgments on people infected with HIV;

And for the sins of not providing the care and support needed by those with HIV;

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

And for the sins of cynicism and passivity about social change;

For the sins of not giving adequate financial support to social change institutions;

And for the sins of being overly critical of social change leaders and not giving them support when they are under attack;

For the sins of making social change leaders, teachers, and activists feel that they are foolish to be giving their lives to the community and to their highest ideals;

And for the sins of expecting that our leaders and activists must be perfect or far more together than the rest of us;

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

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the ways they wronged us when we were children;

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

For the sins of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves;

And for the sins of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

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

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

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

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

For the sins of withholding love and support;

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

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

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

For the sins of not recognizing the beauty within ourselves;

And for the sins of not recognizing the beauty that surrounds us;

For the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

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

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

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

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sins of not recognizing the humanity and suffering of the Palestinian people and the injustice they face living under the unwanted Occupation;

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

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

And for the sins of not supporting those institutions and leaders that have attempted to provide an alternative voice;

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

And for the sins of not spending more time engaged in learning the Jewish tradition and studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts;

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

And for the sins of being insensitive or insulting to non-Jews;

For the sins of not having compassion for each other;

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

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

And for the sins of not helping single people to meet potential partners;

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

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

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

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

In some congregations the service stops after this is read, and people divide into small groups of four to five and discuss what particular aspects of this prayer make most sense to them; what they are going to do differently in the coming year; what support they need from others to help make changes in their lives; and what they are going to do to secure that support.

Composed by Michael Lerner, editor, TIKKUN *magazine, for Yom Kippur, 5753; September, 1992*

PERSONAL ESSAY

I Never Compete With My Brother: An Odyssey of Jewish Spirituality and Acrophobia

Don Futterman

I never compete with my brother. My older brother Matt and I were not allowed to compete. My brother is only two and a half years older than me, but when we were kids he was twice my size. He was enormous. I was always the smallest kid in my class, except for Makoto Suzuki, who was the size of a rabbit. Around the time I hit kindergarten, my brother got bored with beating me up. There was no challenge left for him. So he turned to psychological warfare.

The worst was at night.

My brother and I shared double decker beds. I slept on the bottom because I was afraid of heights and couldn't make it to the top of the ladder. Every night I would wait up for him. At last he would come into our room and climb up to his bed. Then he would drop his arm down next to the wall and make it shake. Then he would say, "This is your conscience."

"No it's not. It's you, Matt."

"I am using your brother's voice. Tomorrow you must leave a dollar under the bed for your brother. And you will tell your mother that you ate the entire box of Yodels."

To tell you the truth, somewhere, deep inside, I knew that was my brother and not my conscience. But since I couldn't get to the top of the ladder I could never catch him in the act. So I wasn't completely sure.

And this, my first existential crisis, lasted for five years. And I did everything he told me to.

Then one night I came into our room to go to sleep and my brother was already in bed. I saw my chance. I rustled the blankets so it would sound like I was getting into bed. Then slowly, I began to climb up the ladder. My brother's arm dropped down next to the wall. I knew I had to keep going. His arm started to shake. I had to go higher, higher than I had ever been before. I was one step from the top. But all I could see was the side of the mattress.

"This is your conscience."

It was now or never.

So I climbed to the top step. And from there I could see my brother, lying on his back, with his eyes wide open. And before he could tell me to do another thing I leaned over and punched him in the stomach as hard as I could.

And I knew that was the last I'd ever hear from my conscience.

My brother also led me to my first religious crisis. In most American synagogues there's a separate service for the kids so they won't disturb the adults who are trying to pray and talk to each other. So every Saturday morning my brother would troop off to Junior Congregation. Now, in my shul, Temple Gates of Prayer in Queens, once a year, in the springtime, the kids from Junior Congregation would get up and lead the adult service in the main sanctuary. So one Saturday morning my parents dressed me in my little suit and took me off to shul to watch my brother do his part in the service. He was going to take out the Torah.

The whole thing was amazing. There was my brother, standing on this stage, all dressed up with his silk *tallis* like a scarf around his neck. And all he did was sing a few Hebrew words, *"Vayehi binsoa ha'aron, vayomer Moshe,"* and 250 adults stood up. Then when he was holding the Torah in his arms, they told me: If he dropped it, he wouldn't be allowed to eat anything for 40 days.

This was exciting.

I gave up Saturday morning cartoons and became the mascot of Junior Congregation. By the next year they had taught me the shortest prayer in the service, the *Ashrei,* so I led the adults in the main sanctuary. But there was one strange thing. The whole time I was up there I heard laughter and giggles throughout the sanctuary. And I never understood why until years later my parents told me that when I was standing behind the lectern, I was so small that no one in the congregation could see me.

My brother went off to Camp Ramah.

There are a few different kinds of Jewish summer camps. There are those camps that are really just social camps for Jewish kids, so that when they start fooling around they'll be fooling around with other Jewish kids. And there are those Jewish summer camps where they teach Jewish kids things that Jews don't do. They take

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Don Futterman is a writer and performer living in San Francisco. I Never Compete With My Brother *is adapted from the first of three autobiographical performance monologues.*

you hunting and fishing and kayaking, and all the groups have the names of Indian tribes. And then there are those religious, educational, cultural Jewish camps where you're supposed to learn some rituals and come back loving Israel and thinking Jewish is beautiful. Camp Ramah was one of these.

Of course Ramah had its own quirk. At Camp Ramah they thought if you took Jewish kids from the suburbs up to the mountains and spoke to them only in Hebrew for the whole summer, they would all come home speaking Hebrew. And if all Jewish children in America spoke Hebrew, the Jewish people would be stronger.

My brother came back from his summer in Camp Ramah as if he had been in paradise. For the rest of the year he sang the only two words from the camp song that he could remember, "*Mahaneinu Ramah,* ahhh ahhh ahhh," until I almost went out of my mind.

The next summer, when I was nine years old, my parents told me I was now old enough to go with my brother to Camp Ramah.

So they packed us off to the Berkshires and it was only once we got there that anybody told me that he and I weren't going to be together all summer. He would be in a bunk in one division, and I would be in another.

The first night I met my counselor. My *madrich*. He was an Israeli. The summer before he had had the nineteen-year-olds, and he didn't realize there was any difference between the two groups. He called us all together and he said, "Ehh, men. From now from end of summer we will to speak only Hebrew. Dees way you will to learn Hebrew. Hokay? Hokay."

I wasn't too excited about this. I only knew four words of Hebrew: *Shalom, eema, abba,* and *shalom*.

Before we went to sleep he came over to my bed and he said to me, *"Atah rotzeh la'asot meespar ehad oh meespar shtayim?"*

So I tried my Hebrew on him.

"Shalom."

"Meespar ehad oh meespar shtayim?"

"Eema?"

"Hokay, hokay. Dees one time I will to speak English. But from now from end of summer, only Hebrew. Doo you wont to make a number one or a number two?"

I had never heard that in English either.

I knew it was going to be a long summer.

It was a very strange scene. You had all these little kids running around whispering to each other in English so they wouldn't be caught and then whenever a staff person walked by we'd pretend we'd been speaking in Hebrew all along, with the few words that we knew, *"Shalom shalom eema abba. Abba abba. Shalom shalom."*

My *madrich* had a rule that you couldn't get food passed to you at the table unless you asked for it in Hebrew. So for the first two weeks of camp I didn't eat.

Before Visitors' Day he warned us we were not allowed to complain to our parents. If they asked how we liked Camp Ramah we had to say, "It's great." So all day my brother babbled on about his friends and his classes and his services and his counselors, and I just kept crying. And every time my parents said, "Don't you like Camp Ramah?" I'd say (crying), "It's great." When my parents left at the end of the day they had to keep stopping the car because I was holding on to the rear fender.

Around the time I hit kindergarten, my brother got bored with beating me up. There was no challenge left for him. So he turned to psychological warfare.

It took me three years to understand why my brother liked Camp Ramah. But at the end of the summer when I was twelve years old, my brother introduced me to my first perfect girlfriend.

I had been in love with her from the first minute of camp. She was exactly my height. She had long dark brown hair and big, brown, puppy dog eyes. She smoked cigarettes—there was something essentially corrupt about her, which frightened me but also attracted me, but in any case she was out of reach because she was going out with Bart Samson, the star of our division. Two weeks before the end of the summer they broke up. And at a big Israeli couples dance my brother picked her as his partner, told her that I liked her, and then switched off with me. And she and I were together from then on.

The next morning she gave me a hot pink yarmulke with a pom-pom, which she had knitted herself. It was the first present I ever got from a girl. And I didn't realize for a long time that she had made this pink flamingo special for Bart Samson and not for me. But I wore it proudly for the rest of the summer.

The most direct consequence of my going to Camp Ramah was that I became the star of Hebrew School. Being the star of Hebrew School feels like a dubious achievement. It's like being Miss Subways.

I had my first major religious crisis my last day of Hebrew School. In our Hebrew School, every year at the end of the year they would have a special awards assembly. And you would get a certificate for each of the courses

you got an 'A' in. So if you got an 'A' in Hebrew, or an 'A' in Jewish Living, or an 'A' in Junior Congregation Attendance, you would get a certificate for each of those courses. And if you got certificates for all three courses, you would get an extra certificate of *Overall Excellence.* And if you got an *Overall Excellence* certificate all five years you were in Hebrew School, when you graduated, you would get an extra certificate of *Absolute Perfection.*

I had four *Overall Excellence* certificates. My last day of Hebrew School my teacher, Rabbi Marcus, called me up to his desk. Now Rabbi Marcus was young. He was hip. We liked him, so I had to listen to what he said.

"So, Don-i-el, what're we gonna give you for grades. Oh, you'll get your 'A' in Hebrew. And you'll get your 'A' in Junior Congregation Attendance. But I don't know what to give you for Jewish Living. Tell me. Do you keep kosher? If you keep kosher you get an 'A.' If you don't, then you get a 'B.'"

This was a ridiculous question. No one in my class kept kosher. No one even knew how.

I was torn. I never lied, especially not to a teacher. But the only thing I could see was my certificate floating right out the window.

I didn't look at Rabbi Marcus for a long time. I didn't know what to answer. Somewhere, on some level, I knew that this was a strange way of being graded.

Finally I pulled myself up and said, "Of course I keep kosher."

"Good. Then you get an 'A.'"

And I got my certificate, and what I didn't realize was that I had mortgaged away my guilt for the next 15 years, that every time I was in a Chinese restaurant I would tremble through the entire meal, sure that Rabbi Marcus was going to walk in the door at any second, innocently needing to use the pay phone or the bathroom, and see me putting a wonton in my mouth, and on the spot make me give back all of my certificates.

My brother, inspired by his latest summer in Camp Ramah, did start keeping kosher. Then he started to keep Shabbat. So from Friday afternoon until Saturday night there were all these rules my brother followed. He wouldn't use money. He wouldn't touch electrical appliances. He put timers on all the lights in the house so they'd go on and off by themselves. He wouldn't drive in the car. He wouldn't write. He wouldn't go shopping. He basically wouldn't do anything he didn't want to do.

To make things more complicated he was going through phases. So one week he was Holy Rabbi Matthew the Pious, but the next week he had given it all up and was back to my brother Matt, then Holy Rabbi Matthew, then my brother Matt, then Holy Rabbi Matthew, then my brother Matt, and I didn't have much strength to keep track of which phase he was in because inside, I knew he was crazy.

Then my brother joined Betar. Betar is a militant Zionist youth movement, something like the Jewish Defense League.

It took me three years to understand why my brother liked Camp Ramah.

At Betar they gave my brother a nunchaku. A nunchaku is a weapon that consists of two sticks of wood, a foot long each, about the width of a broomstick. The sticks are heavy. They're connected by a short rope or chain. If you hold one end of one of the sticks and swing it around in a figure eight, the other stick swings so wildly that if anyone tries to come near you it will break their arm. This is how my brother was going to defend the Jewish people.

They made him swear he was willing to die for the movement, and that if he wasn't willing to give his life for Betar, he should quit right then and there and go join some wishy-washy organization—like Young Judaea.

Then my brother hung up posters of all the Betar heroes in our bedroom. So every morning I would wake up and see Menachem Begin's face staring at me through prison bars from a Wanted Poster from the British Mandate in Palestine in 1947.

And Begin's eyes would get me. I knew what Begin was thinking. "We're proud of your brother. But what have you done for the Jewish people?"

I went and joined Young Judaea. My first day they made me vice president of all of Queens Region. Now it's true, we only had 17 members. But there were half a million Jews in Queens, and I knew I had to set a personal example for each of them.

By now, being Jewish was the most important thing in my life, that much I understood. But what were the day-to-day implications? The problem was that most of the Jewish kids I knew at the Bronx High School of Science seemed pretty much like the Chinese kids at the Bronx High School of Science.

Finally I came to the same conclusion as my brother. I would have to take on the religious practices, the *mitzvot*. But no pendulum swings for me. I was going to take one step at a time, and question it all along the way.

I started slowly. I gave up wonton soup. Then spare ribs. Then Chinese restaurants. I was practically keeping kosher, when I had my second major religious crisis.

It seemed to me that if I carried the logic of Jewish Law to its extreme, I wasn't supposed to have anything to do with girls or sex. At 16 this was all I thought about. It tortured me for weeks. I felt ridiculous. I didn't know where to turn. I had to talk to somebody. Finally I went to my brother. I explained to him my whole dilemma.

My brother looked at me for a long time. It was a deep, sympathetic, understanding gaze. And then he said, "That's the one part we don't follow."

Now everything was okay. And when I graduated high school I put my new yarmulke, my *kippah,* on my head and wore it all the time. Now whoever saw me would know that I was a Jew and proud of it. And I would always remember that there was a God above me.

I went to Israel to learn to be a Jew. My first day I went to the Western Wall, the *Kotel.* I had heard all the stories about the Wall; how it was the only wall still standing from the ancient biblical temples; how it had been built by the poor Jews and that's why it was still standing; and how the Israeli soldiers had recaptured it in 1967 in the Six Day War. I also heard how Jews would come there and write notes to God and stick them in the cracks of the wall.



They told me about one man who came after the Holocaust and wrote a note which said, "Dear God. I am searching for my son. If he survived the war somehow get this note to him. Here is my name and address in Israel." When he put the note in the wall another note fell out. He picked it up and read it. It said, "Dear God. I'm looking for my father. If he is still alive, get this message to him so we can find each other. This is where I live in the new land of Israel." And the note was from that man's son.

My first day at the Wall, I met a man named Meyer Shuster. Meyer Shuster was a tall fellow with a long black Chasidic coat. And even though I had my *kippah* on my head, he came up to me and said, "Y'Juyish?" It's always been my dream to go up to Chasidim at the Wall and say to them, "Y'Juyish?"

Meyer Shuster set me up with a rabbi for *Simchat Torah,* the celebration of finishing the Torah and starting to read it again. This rabbi took me to shul.

This was unlike any place I had ever been. All the men were bobbing and bowing back and forth when they prayed, sort of like crazy people you see waiting to cross the street at a red light. I said to the rabbi, "What are they doing?"

"Oh that's *shuckling!* If you want to throw your whole self into your prayer, you've got to throw your body in too. Go ahead. Try it."

I tried. It felt a little awkward at first but after a while I got the hang of it.

Now I looked around the room. These guys were the healthiest looking Jews I had ever seen in my life. It was as if they had all stepped out of a Bible movie.

"Where are we?"

"This is a Hesder Yeshiva. These boys spend half their time here in the yeshiva studying Torah and the other half in the elite corps of the Israeli army. They're all pilots and paratroopers."

This was the place for me.

"You think you're excited now? Imagine what you'll feel like when Torah really is the center of your life. You've got to study in yeshiva."

"Yeshiva?"

"The time you've spent on Torah is a drop in the ocean in comparison to the time you've spent ... on geometry—not that geometry is unimportant. In yeshiva you'll get yourself a *rebbe.* You'll become a Torah true Jew. Then try to imagine what you'll feel on Simchat Torah, once Torah really is the center of your being."

He had planted the idea in my soul.

After services there was dancing. It was a simple dance. You put one hand on the shoulder of the guy in front of you, waved the other in the air, and sang songs without words to God at the top of your lungs. We did it for hours. My friends and I called it "the chasidic shuffle."

By midnight there were only a few of us young guys left.

Now we locked our arms around each other's shoulders, an unbreakable chain, and we began to circle. Our circle got tighter and we swung ourselves wildly, slick with sweat, circling, singing, around and around. And I knew that my dance could last well past any point of exhaustion or adrenaline, I knew my dance would last

all night, because I knew my dancing was being fueled by my potential to become a Torah true Jew, and that potential was bottomless, and the only thing that distracted me from the power of this dance, the only thing that cut into my joy, was the thought of how much more I would feel someday when I really was a Torah true Jew, when Torah really was the center of my life. And what I didn't know, was that that was as close as I was going to get.

I discovered pretty soon that if I wanted to fit into the religious community in Jerusalem I had to dress the part. People told me that I looked too American, too Mickey Mouse.

I needed a white shirt. Now this was hard to find since no one in Queens had worn a white shirt since 1962. But my father dug one up and mailed it to me in Israel.

I also needed a cardigan sweater. The sweater was important because it was dressy, but it didn't strangle you when you shuckled.

But the key, the key was my *kippah*. They said the glittery tinsel on my *kippah* showed everyone that I had just come from New Jersey to buy a bar mitzvah present for my nephew. The answer was a tightly knit yarmulke with gothic border. It was simple, yet elegant. And it could be held discreetly in place by a bobby pin. Or if you wanted to be really stylish, you could wear it over your right ear, as if God was to your right. But I wasn't ready for that so I just put it on top of my head.

I wanted to be a Torah true Jew but I didn't want to get brainwashed.

And I was set.

Then a letter arrived from my brother, an aerogram. He thought my idea of going to a yeshiva instead of college was wonderful, something he'd always wished he had done himself. And he had come to his own enormous decision. He had decided to become a rabbi.

Now my search for the perfect yeshiva and the perfect rebbe started in earnest.

I went to the "Yeshiva of the Western Wall." There I watched the guys dancing backwards for half a mile away from the Wall, so they wouldn't turn their faces for one moment from God's Holy Temple. I joined them for services. I wanted to have really good concentration on my prayers, really good *kavanah,* but the kid in front of me was shuckling like crazy, and I was shuckling, and we couldn't get in sync, and the back of his head kept getting closer and closer, until it cracked me in the nose.

At the yeshiva "Fire of Torah," the rebbe told me;

"Jew-day-ism is like going up a down escalator. If you don't keep going up, you'll get carried down. You can't stand still."

I thought this was brilliant.

Then I talked to the students. "You know, Judaism is an escalator." "Stay on the escalator." "Keep going up that escalator."

And suddenly I remembered that my grandmother had always been terrified of escalators, and no matter how many times we tried to convince her there was nothing to fear, that she wouldn't fall down the steps, she still wouldn't set foot on an escalator. And I was always the only one who understood she wasn't afraid of falling down the steps. She was afraid of getting sucked in at the top when the steps disappear.

My parents started sending me letters once a week. They wanted me to know they thought my idea of going to yeshiva instead of college was terrible. But the decision was up to me.

Then my mother started calling me. She thought she had to scream all 6,000 miles to Israel.

"HELLO, DONALD?"

"Yes."

"WHAT HAVE YOU DECIDED?"

Silence.

"ARE YOU THERE?"

"I'm here. I haven't decided anything."

I couldn't decide. I wanted to be a Torah true Jew but I didn't want to get brainwashed. Finally my parents came all the way to Israel just to tell me the decision was up to me.

At the end of the year, in June, I went down to the Wall in the middle of the night. I watched an old man sweep up the notes that had fallen out of the cracks during the day. I thought of those yeshiva guys dancing backwards. And I kept seeing the back of that kid's head, coming closer and closer to my nose. And I knew I wasn't ready to go to yeshiva.

And so, at age 18, finally really ready to go to Camp Ramah, I went to Brown University.

At Brown, I got the feeling that the only thing anybody saw of me was my *kippah*. My first morning, I was *davening* in the corner of my dorm room when my roommate, Frank Fariello Jr., woke up and looked across. I'll never forget his face. Then he put on his glasses, and it was worse.

Frank was good about things, but no matter how many times we went over it, every once in a while on Shabbat afternoon, Frank would forget and accidentally

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Rethinking Syria

Larry Cohler

When talking about Syria these days, it is almost a throwaway line to compare its longtime dictator to the ultimate bad guy our post-Communist, post-World War II age has to offer. In an op-ed in the *New York Times* last July, for example, David Twersky of the *Forward,* a Jewish weekly, echoed scores of other pundits in lambasting U.S. policy toward Syria with the charge: "The U.S. looked the other way as Saddam Hussein harbored terrorists and built a huge arsenal—as President Hafez al-Assad of Syria is doing now."

Warned Twersky: "Washington's see-no-evil approach is aimed at securing and sustaining Syrian support for U.S. policies in the Mideast. Evidence of U.S. complicity or disinterest in Syria's drug trafficking, terrorism, and expansionism is mounting."

The charge of Syrian involvement in such international mischief is true enough, as is the charge of excessive U.S. pliability in the face of this. But Twersky and many like him could not be more mistaken in encouraging the West to view Assad as another Saddam—that is, a man beyond the pale for decent people to deal with. The problem is not that we deal with this dictator rather than ostracize him, but that we fail to drive a hard enough bargain.

In Washington today, warnings are rife about the danger of making the same mistakes in engaging Syria that were made in engaging Saddam Hussein. But to be useful, these warnings must take Syria's current demonstrable sensitivity to the West into account.

In contrast to Saddam, who resolved to defy George Bush's New World Order, Assad seeks a role for Syria in it. The realpolitik implications of this, if ignored, will cost the West—and Israel—one of the best opportunities they have had in some time to advance their interests in the region, including interests certain to be regarded as legitimate by advocates of peace in the Middle East.

For the United States, which has assiduously courted Assad—and for American activists for Middle East peace—this presents a tricky question. How aggressively should the United States pursue a relationship with a regime that is willing to mitigate its most atrocious policies but determined to retain its essential nature?

In large measure the United States has not been tough enough. But the current effort by some to simply demonize Syria as, for example, Israel's chief negotiator with Syria under the Shamir government did over five rounds of peace talks, risks losing much. For maximum benefit, Israel and the United States should trade postures: A tougher stand by the United States—while continuing to engage Assad—is likely to offer new opportunities in the peace process for Israel—if Israel opens itself up to more flexible stands than those taken under Shamir.

So far, Itamar Rabinovich, the man Yitzhak Rabin has appointed to negotiate with the Syrians, has been making the right kind of statements. Described in many Israeli quarters as a dove, Rabinovich, rector of Tel Aviv University until his appointment, sounded an opening note that contrasted sharply with the vituperative tone of Yossi Ben Aharon, his Likud predecessor.

"We shall be demonstrating that we have goodwill, with the intention of making progress," Rabinovich said in a statement following his appointment. "The logjam in negotiations with the Syrians so far may be broken up, if they transmit a similar message to us."

Rabinovich noted, "All negotiations, political as well as commercial, require you to be unyielding at some points and flexible at other points, since progress requires you to generate negative motivation as well as positive motivation to attain your objective."

This tone—far from dovish but simply realistic and businesslike—is precisely what was lacking in the rhetoric of Ben Aharon, who dismissed the Syrians as hateful anti-Semites.

But the question remains whether the Israeli public will be prepared for the kind of limited, if mutually beneficial, peace agreement likely to result from negotiations with such a regime—one whose larger aim is less full-fledged peace with Israel than a minimum arrangement necessary to win acquiescence from the West for a substantial role for itself in the region.

Larry Cohler is a senior writer for Washington Jewish Week.

As the first journalist from a mainstream Jewish newspaper to be granted a visa by Syria last June, I was an example of Syria's current need to appeal to the West. But there are far more important manifestations of this need, and its current boundaries, which should be pushed. Still feeling for its grip in the New World Order, the regime of President Hafez Assad has sent modest signals of change while demonstrating a clear intent to retain an iron grip on power. The resulting profile is a contradictory one of striking moves followed by sobering back pulls.

Last winter and spring, for example, the government announced an amnesty for more than 3,000 of Syria's estimated 7,500 to 15,000 political prisoners. The human rights group, Middle East Watch, says a total of some 5,000 political prisoners were actually released between May 1991 and January 1992, leaving an estimated 2,500 political prisoners still in jail.

There was only one problem with the good news of the amnesty: The regime steadfastly refused to make public a list of the prisoners who had been released.

Syrians repeatedly expressed fear that the Zionist goal is to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates.

Human rights groups and Western diplomats in Damascus implored Syrian officials to release the names, but to no avail. Eventually, human rights groups were able to verify most of the releases on their own. But the regime, though clearly seeking credit for the amnesty, refused to help.

Amnesty International says it believes "several thousand" political prisoners remain in Syrian jails. And since the amnesty announced last December, "hundreds" of new political suspects have been arrested, the group reports. Many have been released, but some are still being held, it says. "Despite the amnesties, prisoners of conscience remain locked up ... torture is still rife.... Where is the change?" asks Amnesty in an official statement.

In fact, there is none if the issue is the regime's continued resolve to do whatever is necessary to stay in power. But international pressures for greater openness and the regime's confidence regarding a thoroughly routed opposition have combined to yield a significant net decrease in the number of Syrian political prisoners.

Last April, in another public relations coup, the United States praised the Assad regime for its decision to lift special travel restrictions on Syria's 4,000 Jews. But by mid-June, after a modest beginning, the process ground to a halt. For three weeks, Syrian Jews were unable to obtain exit visas and passports even as the head of the immigration office—purportedly in charge of the process—told me Jews who applied to leave could receive permission within one day.

It was the *mukhabarat,* the Syrian secret police, who were really in charge. Syrian Jews recounted an application process in which the immigration office had virtually no role, though it continued to process travel papers for non-Jewish Syrians. It was only after news of the freeze on travel visas broke in the Western press that the *mukhabarat* resumed a slow but steady process of granting Jews exit visas.

For all this fitfulness, the amnesties and the lifting of travel restrictions on the Jews reflect a regime acutely subject to Western pressures right now. As Jamal al-Atassi, the beleaguered leader of Syria's quixotic coalition of mostly illegal opposition parties, told me, "The regime is just trying to do what the United States wants it to do. [But] even when the Unites States asks Assad for changes, they're not really changes to help the people but only to serve the United States' own interests." In Atassi's view, all the United States seeks from Syria is support for the U.S. position against Iraq, Assad's participation in the Mideast peace process, and liberalization of Syria's economy so as to open it up to international capital.

For the United States, these are not minor returns. But under current conditions, Washington can obtain considerably more. Syria wants the State Department to remove it from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism and grant it liberalized trade credits. But first, issues such as Syrian support for terrorist groups and the involvement of Syrian military officials in the Lebanese drug trade must be resolved.

Significantly, Syrian officials, who previously dismissed allegations that Syrian military officers were engaged in the drug trade, now acknowledge that some may be involved as individuals. Even with Syria's current need to reposition itself, progress will not come quickly on such issues. But this kind of evolution underscores the need to engage Syria aggressively rather than to ostracize it.

Now a test looms that will highlight persistent questions about how much the United States has paid for Syrian compliance on the issues Atassi cites. Many critics of the current U.S.-Syria entente have charged that Syria's flexibility is part of a deal under which the Bush administration agreed to accept, among other things, Syria's comprehensive hegemony over Lebanon. But under the Taif Accords it signed earlier, Syria committed to withdraw some 30,000 troops it

has stationed throughout Lebanon to the Bekaa Valley in September and allow the Lebanese government to reassert its sovereignty over that country's fractured polity.

Lately, the Assad regime has sent out strong signals that it will ignore this commitment, in part, it is clear, to test the U.S. reaction. That reaction should be a firm one to a regime seeking removal from the U.S. terrorism list. So far, the administration's response has been anything but.

In ironic contrast to the administration's excessive deference to Syria, Israel, under the government of Yitzhak Shamir, evinced a tough, unbending line that threatened to squander the opportunities Syria's current position offered Israel. For best results, the United States and Israel should switch their roles.

In the Mideast peace talks, Israel's complete rejection of territorial compromise on the Golan Heights left Syria and Israel with little to discuss besides each other's intrinsically evil nature. But a failure to earnestly pursue the modest opening that Syria's present situation offers means foregoing an important window of opportunity.

It is not only that Syria will play a destructive, spoiler's role against any agreement with the Palestinians that freezes Syria out. (The aphorism "There can be no Middle East war without Egypt and no Middle East peace without Syria" is an apt one.) As Yitzhak Rabin has noted, in the long term, the increasing ability of modest powers like Syria to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological arms will transform the strategic terrain in the Middle East. Syria's current efforts to achieve some measure of deterrence through acquisition of SCUD missiles will be succeeded by an effort to achieve a standoff comparable to the Mutually Assured Destruction that characterized the East-West relationship for so long, unless strong, mutually verifiable agreements are reached before this. Syria and Israel have much to talk about.

To Israeli officials, Syria's current pattern of cautious liberalization followed by partial retrenchment is a deliberate spectacle designed to send a message: hardheaded calculations of realpolitik in the New World Order may move Assad to make certain concessions to Western pressures, they say. But at the same time, he means to demonstrate beyond a doubt who remains in control, able and ready to turn concessions on and off at will.

In the Syrian business world and among pro-government intellectuals, however, the belief is widespread that Assad means to move cautiously but steadily toward a more open political and economic system while continuing Syria's participation in the peace process. Many depict the *mukhabarat* and the Ba'ath party, the prime institutions that keep his regime in power, as the main groups he must be aware of as he moves, painting Assad improbably as picking his way through an almost Gorbachevian dilemma.

"Maybe what he has in mind is to move from a one party system to a multiparty system, but carefully," said Aziz Shukri, dean of the law school at Damascus University. "Face it. Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union face chaos now. The man wants to avoid it. He is a slow, patient leader. He does not just want to cancel the current system. He could, but that would upset the Ba'athists in power without gaining any certain support from new parties."

Mohammad al-Cach, a former economic advisor to Assad, speaks of Assad's efforts to liberalize the state dominated economy, but "without mentioning the word privatization."

Syria's participation in the peace process means that contact with Israel can never again be viewed as inherently illegitimate.

Obliquely, he explains, "This is to avoid any undesirable reaction." He nods slightly when I ask if he is referring to Assad's core of supporters in the Ba'ath Party and the security services who have a vested interest in the current system.

Slow and cautious is Assad's style, says al-Cach, who was an economic advisor to Assad from 1968 to 1975. This same trait can be seen in Assad's approach to the peace process, al-Cach adds. Not for him the bold move of Sadat, who made no attempt to prepare his own people, a rashness that led to his assassination. "You must be wise more than courageous to make the right decision at the right time," he said.

Syria's participation in the peace process, however, is the one policy change that cannot be easily cut back. With Syrians sitting face to face with officials from the Zionist entity they have long reviled—and still do—as the region's prime international outlaw because of its occupation of the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza, such contact can never again be denounced as inherently illegitimate. This is the core of the concessions Syria has made to U.S. interests, and the one it cannot simply back out of without jeopardizing the role it seeks for itself in the region with U.S. acquiescence. My presence in the country was just another small step in Syria's unprecedented campaign to make its case in the public opinion arena of the United States, the one country that now really matters for the region.

In the changed world situation since the decline and fall of the Soviet Union, Syrian officials today clearly believe they can—or must—sell their cause in the West. In their conversations with me, the message was that Syria is ready to offer Israel peace, a grudging acceptance, and significant security guarantees, but only in exchange for complete withdrawal from the Golan and land for peace with the Palestinians.

That message may seem uncompromising or even outrageous to Israelis who remember when Syrian soldiers shelled settlements in the Galilee from the Golan before 1967. But the Syrians believe they can sell their message to the rest of the world, including the United States, as nothing less than simple justice under the ground rules of international legitimacy, spelled out in America's own New World Order.

"Assad is very patient and willing to follow the road to the bitter end. He is determined to expose Israel no matter how long it takes," said Aziz Shukri, the Damascus University Law School dean.

Shukri, a confidant of Assad's son Basil, the putative heir apparent, said that the Syrian leader had rejected advice from aides to take a harsher stand, especially after Israel's bombing campaign in South Lebanon in the waning days of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud government. Assad's lack of response to this campaign "means he is not an easy man to provoke," said Shukri. "If he is provoked, he is ruthless. But he realizes the nineties are not the eighties. There's no Soviet Union to lean on."

This is hard-nosed realpolitik. It implies no ideological reevaluation of Israel and the Zionist enterprise along the lines of the historic Soviet rethinking of its 70-year conflict with the West. Even those simply waiting for the outreach of an extended hand à la Egyptian President Anwar Sadat will be disappointed. Instead, as a Syrian merchant friend of mine in the souk (market) said looking down from his balcony on the dense crowds below, it is simply that "people are tired."

Economically, that is true as well. And this, too, is a factor in Syria's stance toward the basic question of war versus diplomacy. Years of relentless but ultimately numbing anti-Israel propaganda have crashed against deteriorating economic conditions and repeated setbacks in the struggle against the Jewish state to severely limit the regime's ability to rally an enervated public with the old anti-Zionist slogans. These days, says Mamdou Adwan, one of Syria's most prominent poets and an outspoken critic of the regime, "People are too overwhelmed just trying to survive to care about fighting Israel."

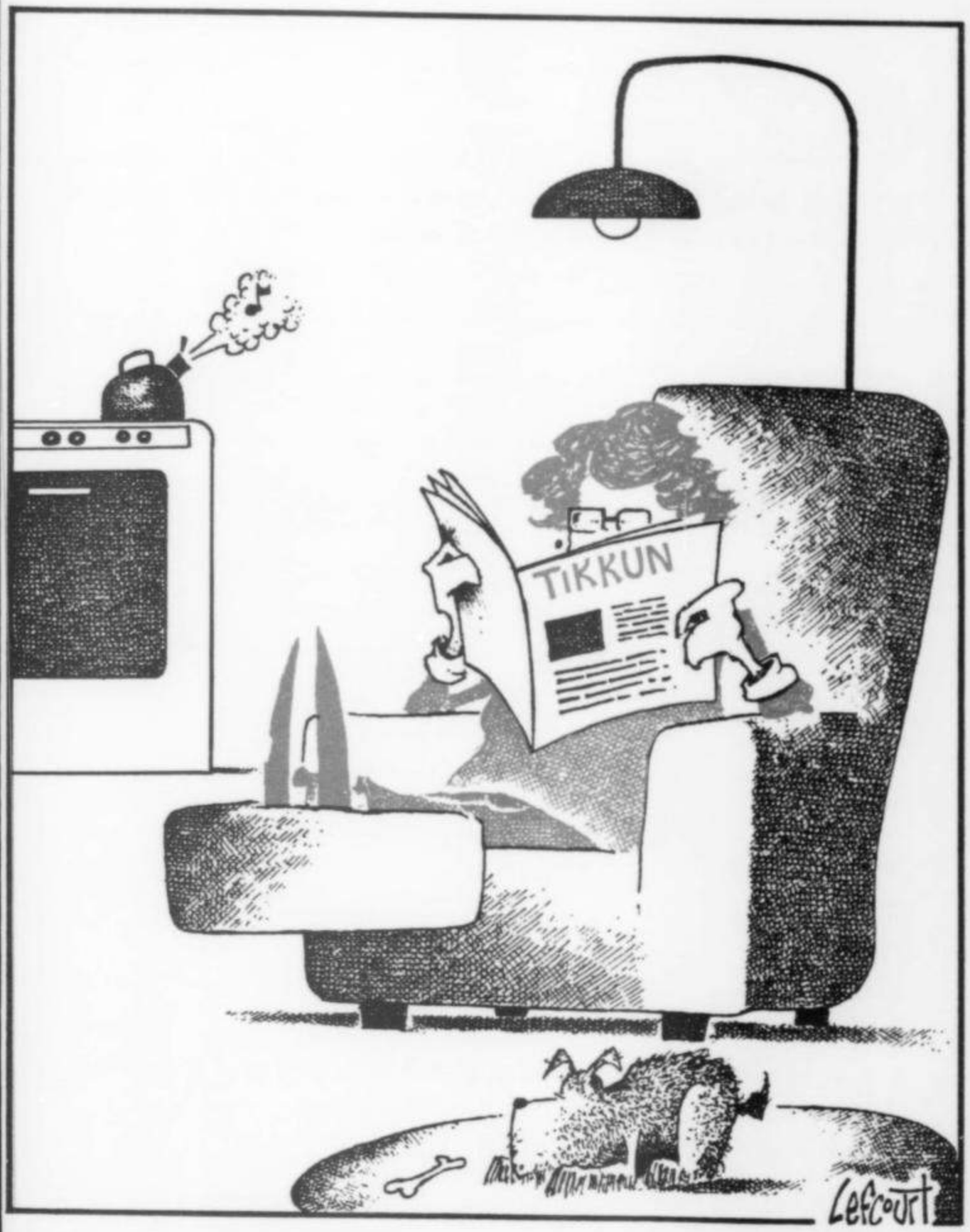
The regime's need to deal with its changed world position, its economic slide, and its own people's fatigue have enormous implications for the peace process. It means the option of war against Israel is effectively foreclosed for the near and medium term. Syria may try to leapfrog across its enormous military gap with Israel by obtaining SCUD missiles. But this is, at best, a deterrent measure for a society thoroughly unmotivated to suffer more sacrifices or rally around a war that would necessarily follow any use of these arms—a war in which they would lack any patron to give them support.

On the other hand, the kinds of agreements to be reached with such a regime are quite different from the kind that was reached with Egypt. Even with its disappointments and unfulfilled hopes, the Camp David Accords stand in principle as a separate but comprehensive peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The kind of agreements to be reached with Syria—a much harsher dictatorship whose changed posture toward Israel is still less strategic than tactical—are more analogous to those reached between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. No fundamental change in attitude was assumed by either side toward the other. But both sides resolved limited, specific issues with each other out of their coldest calculations of mutual self-interest.

In the context of the Cold War, the agreements reached under these conditions, such as the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and Salt I, were nothing to sneeze at. And in the broader view, they provided the impetus for further dialogue that led to the Helsinki Accords. With its human rights basket, this agreement became the wedge for developments more profound than anyone at the time imagined—save for a few human rights visionaries. But the chain of events leading to this was long and indirect, in stark contrast to the clear, sharp turn marked by Camp David.

Negotiations on this basis mean foregoing the satisfaction of embrace and acceptance that was such an animating aspect of the Camp David agreement, and so important to underlying Israeli psychological needs after decades of rejection. A real peace treaty and full diplomatic relations, if these are achieved, will come only after a series of more limited military and security agreements that will offer little, initially, for the average Israeli to grab on to as a sign of a new era.

Whether the Israeli public can accommodate such a limited advance is an open question. Israeli memories of Syria raining mortar from the Golan down onto Galilee towns and kibbutzim are still sharp, and unmitigated by any Syrian gestures of a fundamental change in attitude towards Israel. Since then Israelis are understandably wary about being suckered into any agreement that would reopen its vulnerability to such a regime. But Syria's weak geopolitical and economic position is much


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more pressing now if Israel is to exploit current conditions for its best long-term benefit.

Rabin has referred to a sketchy plan for a leasing arrangement that would return formal sovereignty of the Golan to Syria but allow Israeli troops to remain in certain places to protect Israeli security. But the idea was not welcomed by most Syrians. In their minds, a key component of any agreement is mutuality.

One Syrian security expert on the official negotiating team spoke to me of mutual demilitarization of the Golan, the reduction of troops, and UN control of the demilitarized area as ways of ensuring the security of both countries. All of these were predicated, however, on Israel accepting the principal of withdrawal.

"We agree with Israel on the need for mutual security," said this official. "It is in the interest of Syria to take all security arrangements which guarantee trust and stability between the two sides."

The official, who spoke prior to the Israeli election that brought Labor to power, spoke on the condition that his name not be used. But his remarks, which were made during a formal interview at the Syrian Information Ministry, marked a new stage in Syria's public negotiation posture.

At the Madrid conference that launched the Mideast peace process last November, Syria had vowed it would not even discuss security arrangements until Israel actually withdrew from the Golan. Later, relenting somewhat, Syrian officials said such talk would have to await an Israeli commitment to the *principle* of withdrawal. This official's willingness to discuss the issue even in the absence of any indication by Israel that it was prepared to contemplate territorial compromise on the Golan signalled an unprecedented desire to engage Israel on the real substance of the dispute.

In private discussions, some Israeli military experts have also reportedly spoken of the possibility of tough, mutually verifiable demilitarization measures by both sides that could satisfy Israel's security requirements. These bring to mind the principle of Ronald Reagan—no soft liner—articulated in the early arms control talks between himself and Gorbachev: "Trust. But verify."

Ultimately, this could mean human or technological monitors stationed by each side on the territory of the other to ensure demilitarization and force reduction in the sensitive areas—something like the on-site mutual verification arrangements discussed between the United States and the former Soviet Union. But in the short term, to begin what will surely be a long and hard road, the two parties need to reach a modest, even symbolic agreement whose import would be more political than substantive. Both sides could, for example, agree to a pullback of five to ten kilometers on the Golan in an area not seen as compromising their real security. At this stage, the real value would be the mere act of reaching and enacting an agreement for the first time since the two countries' mutual disengagement agreement on the Golan in 1974.

The Syrian security official, who has been involved in the peace talks as a member of the Syrian delegation since the Madrid conference last November, also spoke of the regime's concern for a backlash from the Syrian public, whose attitudes have been shaped by the regime itself.

Even today, the Syrian media offer their public no information that would excite their interest in the peace process or enable them to conceive of Israelis in human rather than purely political terms. The Madrid peace conference, which exposed millions of Arabs to their first images of Arabs and Israelis sitting together, was not broadcast in Syria. Israeli music, with its increasingly Arab flavor that many Syrians could relate to, is unheard of. Israeli films, with their complex characters who often challenge Israeli orthodoxies, are unknown, leaving only stereotypes.

Unlike the Camp David Accords, peace with Syria will come only after a series of limited military and security agreements that will offer little emotional satisfaction for the average Israeli.

Yet Syrian officials, who control the media, continue to speak gravely of needing to give deference to a Syrian public hostile to the peace process.

For Israelis, this will mean dealing with Syrians whose conditional willingness to reach mutual accommodations is buried beneath layers of suspicion. At the official level it will mean dealing with people from the same circles as May Chatty, who sputtered to me, "How can I talk to an Israeli?" when I asked about her interest in Israelis on an unofficial person-to-person basis.

Chatty, a sophisticated and refined painter whose brother is Minister of Health, explained, "I'll talk to a Jew or any nice person, but how can I discuss peace with an Israeli? All the time we read in the newspaper about Israelis killing Palestinians, blowing up their houses, expelling them. All the time we hear about Israel's claim, from the Nile to the Euphrates. How can we trust them when they act like that and say they want peace?"

"Israel," she said, "is like a straw in our eye. You can't imagine. Every time we blink, it hurts."

Yet despite her feelings about Israeli policies and her conviction that the establishment of the Jewish state was unjust, Chatty says she is prepared to live in peace with Israel within international boundaries. "I have children," she notes. "I don't want them to die for the war against Zionism or for Syria—or for anything. I am no different than a Jewish mother in that way."

Mamdou Adwan is one of Syria's leading poets and a forthright critic of the Assad regime as undemocratic and corrupt. But he says emphatically, "The majority of Syrians disagree with the regime's domestic and human rights practices but agree with its foreign policy."

The majority approves of Syrian participation in the negotiations and the stance adopted by the negotiators, he says. "They don't expect peace from the negotiations," he said before the recent Israeli elections. "How can you, with the news every day from South Lebanon and Gaza? But they see no other option."

George Saadikini, a Ba'athist historian, spoke of "four wars in which we fought against Israel like Don Quixote."

"We know now that Israel is a reality because Israel is occupying our territory," said Saadikini. That is why "the first principle of the peace process must be the occupied territories for peace ... I can't conceive of peace in my mind without the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories."

If Israel accepts this principle, "We can speak about everything," he said, including a peace treaty. "Now we have to be realists, to understand realpolitik ... and get the best peace we can."

Despite Syria's long term economic woes, 50 percent of Syria's budget goes for defense. And most Syrians support these huge outlays out of a genuine fear of Greater Israel. "We are as afraid of Greater Israel as they are of Greater Syria," said Adwan.

I encountered this fear repeatedly from people who earnestly believe that the Zionist goal is to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. As Mouneir Ali, a translator provided to me by the Ministry of Information, saw it, Jews tend to lay claim to any part of the region they have dwelled in historically.

The Syrians may be victims of relentless propaganda about Israel's expansionist designs, but their media have often only needed to quote Likud leaders to make this version of reality seem plausible.

Hostility and fear toward Jewish immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union stem from the same source. One Syrian Foreign Ministry official told me that even if Israel and the Arabs eventually solve their border problems, there can't be real peace in the end if Israel continues to bring "more and more Jews that the land cannot support." The pressures on the land will inevitably lead to irredentism and future strife, "not for me or for the next generation, but for our grandchildren," said this official. Ironically, this is one of the arguments Israelis sometimes use against establishing a Palestinian state to which Palestinians might return.

Beyond the issue of borders, Syrian intellectuals also insist that Israel must in some fundamental way "become part of the region" rather than part of the West used against the interests of Arab countries in the region.

"The fault was that from the beginning, after the foundation of the Jewish state, Israel always put itself in the service of occidental interests," said Saadikini, the Ba'athist historian and ideologist. "In our mind, if the Zionists want to live here, and you are a new neighbor, you must make good neighborly relations and not make good relations with occidental interests against the Arabs."

"It's not only a question of international borders," said Dr. Jamal Atassi, a Nasserite opponent of the Assad regime, "but of whether Israel wants to become part of the Middle East or part of the Western world."

But few Syrians seem to have thought seriously about what steps Syria might take—despite the injustices of history as they see it—to bring Israel into the region and make the Israelis feel they belong there.

There appears to be little public pressure on the government to achieve quick results in the peace talks. The media barrage of images of Israeli repression on the West Bank and bombings in Lebanon may sour expectations toward the talks. But the numbing repetition no longer seems to enrage the Syrian people, who are preoccupied with economic struggle. According to one merchant, "People just don't react anymore."

As one young man juggling two jobs said, when I asked about the readiness of Syrians to wait out the peace process in the face of continued violence on the West Bank and South Lebanon, "Yes, why not? It doesn't affect us here."

Ironically, this attitude may facilitate acceptance among Syrians of the kind of limited, hardheaded peace agreement of the sort likely to emerge from this stage of the process. More than anything, Syrians seem to view their conflict with Israel now as one more problem among a plethora of headaches they have now which they would like to be done with—albeit not at any price.

Israelis, who are prone to view Camp David as their measure for peace, may be looking for something more. Yitzhak Rabin, a security oriented, unsentimental former general, seems personally indifferent to symbolic gestures of the sort that sustained the Egyptian peace process. But he will ultimately need the political support of a more expectant public. In the tough negotiations ahead, they will confront a peace process much more limited in scope than Camp David, but whose success is hardly less crucial for Israel's interests. □

Is the Earth a Jewish Issue?

Arthur Waskow

If we were to imagine the best possible context for progressive political change, we might seek to address—

•A sharp and major danger that threatens people across virtually all social, economic, and ethnic categories;

•A status quo in which those who benefit the most from doing nothing about that danger are few in number and are concentrated in positions of great wealth and power;

•An alternative vision that inspires joy and desire, so that political action is not rooted only in fear and anger but also in hope and celebration;

•The possibility of taking small actions in households and local face-to-face communities as well as large actions in public policy;

•The possibility of drawing on a set of symbols, practices, and ideas that together give people a strong sense of emotional, intellectual, and existential meaning; that already have legitimacy in the culture as a whole; and that can be authentically revitalized as a path of social change, even if they are not already "in play" toward that end;

•The presence of a proto-community or network of people and institutions in which these symbols and ideas are rooted—ideally, a community that also has learned to be politically effective and has built a power base.

All these conditions are met in regard to the dangers now facing the web of life on this planet. This web, which is not the "environs" around us but is in fact part of us as we are part of it, is now in deeper danger than at any time since the human race came into being—and the danger stems from the unbridled and destructive use of human technology.

At the same time, we have a deeper understanding of the web itself than we have ever had. And we have some glimmers of the possibility of a joyful life as part of the planetary web, if we can learn to live as part of it—to live in and with the earth rather than from and upon it.

Symbolically, the healing of the earth is the transcendent issue of our generation because it affects us in our widest sense of connection with nature and with future generations. Unlike many symbolic issues, it also affects us in our everyday lives, for the wounded earth strikes back at us through the intense pain and death of environmentally caused cancers, immune-system diseases, and famines—with worse still to come, as global warming and ozone depletion accelerate and as plutonium and petrochemical poisonings take their deadly toll decades after the event.

This confluence of symbolic and practical issues is moving more and more of us to feel the *need* to act—and to feel it is *possible* to act.

In order to act with intelligence, passion, and power, we must join ancient spiritual wisdom to our modern scientific knowledge. And we must join both of these to political effectiveness and power.

The Jewish people has a stake in the success of this project and has both its own wisdom and its own political power to contribute in walking this life-path.

Why, one might say, the Jews? What unique role have we to play?

Our stake is no more unique than that of the Navajo, or the citizens of Chernobyl, or the rubber workers of the Amazon, or the redwoods and the dolphins. Each of us is endangered—and perhaps each of us also has something uniquely our own to contribute to a great mosaic of what needs to be thought, said, and done. Can we then draw on our uniqueness to save ourselves and each other?

Here it is important to realize that the Jewish people, like the Navajo, has a traditional wisdom that goes back long before the modern age; and like the most modern of clever citizenries, the Jewish people also has the knowledge, the contacts, and the clout to act effectively in the modern political arena. If the movement to heal the earth needs both wisdom and power, we can contribute some of both—if we choose to.

And if we do choose to, working to heal the earth can become a powerful lever for moving the American Jewish community in a progressive direction.

Since most North American Jews are economically

Waskow is director of The Shalom Center, author of Seasons of Our Joy *and the forthcoming* Down-to-Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life, *and coeditor of* New Menorah, *a journal of Jewish renewal.*

and socially comfortable, the sharpest experience of actual danger in our own lives is probably the environmental danger. It is also the one we most share with others in every class and country. It therefore lends itself both to Jewish action and to coalition building.

Since the major opponents of an earth-protective political economy are global corporations (especially those linked to oil, petrochemicals, and automobiles), the issue lends itself to a progressive analysis that will constantly deepen among people who begin taking action.

People are most effective when they act together, in community, with a shared vision.

The Jewish people could be such a community, sharing such a vision. Much of our practice harks back to our origins as a pastoral-agricultural people that saw in everyday life that we needed to sustain the earth that sustained us.

From this knowledge grew the practice of Shabbat and the Sabbatical Year, when we and the earth rest together; the festivals that celebrate the cycles of earth, moon, and sun; and the notion that we need to control our own consumption through the code of kosher food.

It is true that most of us for the last few generations have shrugged off these practices, treated them as anachronisms suited *only* to an agricultural-pastoral people. But what we are learning now about the web of life on earth is that we are all still, so to speak, shepherds and farmers. The only issue is whether we are good farmers and shepherds or destructive ones. Good shepherds know that they live in an ecosystem that includes sheep, grass, rain, earth, beetles, and the shepherds themselves. The shepherds are different from the other elements in the ecosystem mainly in that they have a higher degree of conscious responsibility to live in balance within the eco-web.

Today we, all of us, are in fact responsible for the survival of many life forms on the planet. We can encourage balance—or destroy it. Recovering this sense of ourselves as shepherds of/within all life does not mean going back to exactly what it meant to be literal shepherds in the ancient land of Canaan. Today we can draw on—not reenact but *draw on*—the approaches that we learned then through generations of experience. We can learn from them (not least, from the very sense that it takes a multigenerational view to create wise social policy), and we can take them in new directions. *Our ceremonies, our congregations, our metaphors, could bind us together in emotion, intellect, and spirit—to act on environmental issues.*

Our Jewish traditions can also give us a vision of hope and joyful life, not merely a vision of doom. Certainly one way to understand the requirement for resting on Shabbat and the Sabbatical Year is the grim knowledge that if we do not, the earth will force us to rest anyway, through desolation. Indeed, the Torah says exactly that. But at the same time, we made Shabbat and the Sabbatical Year not a time of grim foreboding and fear, but a time of joy: a time for song, for making love, for studying the ancient sacred teachings, for sharing the new wisdom that constantly emerges from our lives if we take time to let it come.

In that same way, we can draw from the ecological crisis not only a sense of danger but one of life intertwined and a life-practice that celebrates this intertwining. We can begin to enact in our present lives some piece of the more harmonious future that we imagine. That would make our politics more whole—and more powerful.

If we renew our tradition (and especially the earth-healing parts of it) to address the present crisis, there will be a double payoff: a healthier earth and a healthier Jewish people. A Jewish environmental campaign will bring many Jews who are otherwise alienated from Jewish life back into the Jewish community—especially the young, for whom healing the earth is a life-and-death question.

In this sphere, daily life-practice and social action both matter. This means that both Jews who think Judaism centers on keeping kosher and those who think it centers on social action can become involved and then can broaden their involvement, step by step.

The clearest need and most urgent political act is creating a Jewish coalition to prevent global warming. Such a coalition would seek massive cuts in emissions of carbon dioxide—especially by radically reducing use of oil and gasoline.

There are many fronts on which such a battle should be fought—conservation, new sources of renewable energy, tougher regulation of oil drilling and oil tankers, new transportation policy, highest possible compulsory standards of gasoline mileage in U.S. cars, higher taxes on gasoline, and international treaties making mandatory reductions in CO_2 emissions.

At local, regional, and national levels, Jews need to work in coalition with a whole range of others—environmental groups, other religious groups, and public action groups that are rooted in labor, racial, ethnic, or regional constituencies. That does *not* mean vanishing into a soup. We have our own wisdom, our own organizations, our own experience, and our own networks to contribute. We will all accomplish a lot more in mosaics.

This does not all happen automatically. *We need organizers.* A *body* of organizers, not just scattered individuals. Devoted ones, with a sense of commitment to each other as well as to the earth and the Jewish people. That is how things get done. The Shalom Center's effort

to create an "Eco-Shalom Corps" points the way. These will be people of college age who are trained for one month as Jewishly oriented and knowledgeable environmental organizers, who are then placed as interns for a year to connect Jewish groups into environmental coalitions. At best, they will then stay in touch with each other year after year, developing an *esprit de corps* that will keep them moving over years and decades to heal both the earth and the Jewish people.

Although reduction in the use of oil and gasoline is one of the most urgent and most doable single actions, there are other policy steps that we should be considering on a longer range basis. Among them *might* be any or all of the following:

•Encourage the Jewish people throughout the world to reshape itself into a model community for pursuing an environmentally sound life-practice—including strong support for "eco-kosher" purchasing, consuming, conserving, and investing by the Jewish community; reworking all present Jewish study (rabbinical education, summer camps, years in Israel, afternoon synagogue schools, adult Torah study, day school curricula) to address the question of protecting the earth; recovering the cycle of the Jewish year as a celebration of sun, moon, and earth; and supporting Jewishly committed environmental organizers.

•Encourage Israel to become a major world center for research, development, production, and sale of pro-environmental technology. Israel is in an unusually good position to move in this direction because it has a relatively strong background in solar and renewable energy and a large pool of new immigrants who are trained engineers and technologists but have no jobs. Progressive Jews who want Israel to be secure, prosperous, and *menschlich* would gain a great deal from helping to create an Israel whose chief high-tech export was not weapons but solar autos and heaters.

•Support extension of "environmental impact statements" (now applied to land use) to major investments in new products and major government investments (e.g., require proposals for a new highway program to undergo an environmental impact report that compares it with an investment of the same size in mass transit; require major corporations to undergo environmental-impact assessments before developing and introducing major new products).

•Urge periodic moratoria (e.g., one year in every seven?) on all new technological research and development except research on healing mortal diseases, during which there would be major national/international review of goals of new technologies and their effects on society and the environment.



•Urge adoption of a nationwide one-day period each month (each week?) for "low-impact living"—low use of fuel, electricity, meat, etc. Strongly discourage travel and other high-energy-using pursuits for this day and encourage neighborhood folk festivals, town meetings on healing the earth, etc.

What does it mean for us to bring such "Jewish" approaches to the broadest issues of national and international policy? We are bringing Jewish wisdom to bear not only in its specific teachings about the path to be walked by the Jewish people, but as it might address all human kind and indeed all living, breathing beings on the planet.

There is, in fact, inscribed within the specifically Jewish Torah, a Torah that applies to all the earth. That is the Torah of Noah's children, the Torah of the Rainbow—the covenant to preserve all species and the great cycles of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.

This is the overarching Torah, the crucial teaching within which every other question must be asked, every other issue be adjudged. What it means today is that we must invent no new technology, enact no tax, declare no war, make *no* great decision without first asking: How will it effect the biosphere in which all of our lives and societies are embedded, and on which we all depend? □

Organizations that have focused on various aspects of the environment from a Jewish renewal standpoint include the following:

•The Shalom Center (Eco-Shalom Corps of organizers; public policy, some liturgy and curricula): 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119

•Shomrei Adamah (Jewish curricula, some liturgy): Church Rd. and Greenwood Ave., Wyncote, PA 19095

•Oznaiim Communications (Jewish arts and theater): 608 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia, PA 19119

•P'nai Or Religious Fellowship (liturgy, spiritual responsibility): 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119

•Institute for Jewish Renewal (Eco-Kosher Project): 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119

•Melton Center at Jewish Theological Seminary (theological and theoretical analysis): 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027

IS THE EARTH A JEWISH ISSUE?

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We invented a life-path both practical and spiritual -- shaping both ***sustainable prosperity and joy in the earth.***

But today -- we face
Oil spills.
Ozone depletion.
Global warming.
Cancer. Drought.
Famine.
Immune diseases.

Today the Jewish people must come to the aid of Planet Earth -- and of ourselves. We can draw on our age-old wisdom in new forms, and use our modern political know-how to good ends. By doing so, we will also help renew Jewish life. **We will say to our children that there is a purpose, a vision, at the heart of Judaism.**

The Shalom Center action program:

1. **We are organizing the Eco-Shalom Corps.**
Every year in a summer-camp setting, we do an intensive four-week training of college-age youth as skillful Jewish environmental organizers, and then place them as interns. At a crucial time in their lives, they learn how Jewish commitment can heal the earth.

2. **We initiated the Eco-Kosher Project.**
We are bringing together national and grass-roots leaders of many different Jewish bodies to stimulate "Eco-Kosher" practice: Jewish organizations can use recycled paper, insulate buildings, invest money in ways that protect the earth instead of destroying it. We are sending out speakers, pamphlets, and ideas for sermons to further this work.

3. **We are creating a Jewish coalition to help change public policy.**
Global warming can be halted by changing public policy to favor conservation and renewable energy instead of America's present dangerous over-use of oil and gasoline. Jews cannot do this alone, but can help get it done. The Jewish coalition will work with other groups to change Federal, state, local, and corporate policies in transport, housing, and energy.

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—— This is a great way to celebrate Rosh Hashanah! Please include me as a member of The Shalom Center. Send me The Shalom Report five times a year and other practical information on how to heal the earth. What can I and the Jewish community do to help?

I enclose —— $360 —— $180 —— $100 —— $57.53 —— (other)
VISA/MC#_____Name on card_____Exp. date____

(If you send $100 or more, we will send you Arthur Waskow's delightful handbook on the Jewish holidays, *Seasons of Our Joy*, personally inscribed to you by the author.)

Name _____
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City /State /Zip _____
Phone/s _____

How I Became Interested in Multiple Sclerosis: On Illness and the Curve of History

Gerald Rosenfield

Perhaps it was more a matter of losing interest in it. In coming down with it. Like the man who found an escape from the prospect of failure by writing a book about the power of positive thinking. There was a specific moment when I lost interest in getting multiple sclerosis, one afternoon in 1965 sitting in the foyer of a doctor's office waiting for a friend to pick me up after a consultation with the chief of urology at the leading medical institution in San Francisco. My bladder still wasn't working, despite the fact that the other symptoms of the illness had gone away and I was finally seeing singly rather than doubly again. This neurological disorder had followed the worst case of influenza I'd ever suffered; the flu had struck me down as a sort of denouement to three months of coming home from work every night to stare at the typewriter in a futile effort to explain to the world what the free speech movement at the University of California at Berkeley the previous fall had been all about. At one point I took what I had written to a journalist friend in desperation; he read it and said only, "This isn't an article; it's a collection of notes."

I was stymied. Then the flu hit, during which I recall a vivid nightmare of a menacing shadow of a man looming over my bed as I lay there helpless. I awoke from the bad dream and got over the flu, but one day soon thereafter I went to pee and couldn't. It was like that self-conscious moment at the public urinal when it takes a little longer to get the stream started, only no one was watching. My underlying problem, of course, was that the whole world was watching, and I couldn't produce. The double vision and the recurrence of fever must have followed the anuria, because by the time a friend had gotten me to the hospital, where an emergency room doctor saved my life with a catheter, I was really sick. Several weeks later and out of the hospital, with my other symptoms resolved, I was still wearing a tube in my abdomen to tap the nonfunctioning bladder.

So I was sitting there in the foyer of the doctor's office waiting for my friend to pick me up, and I made up my mind that when my legs gave out I would shoot myself. The chief of urology, a wizened old plumber of a man, had read my medical chart, asked me a question or two, and opined, "Well, there are two things that can cause this: multiple sclerosis, or a form of hysterical depression seen in young women." Twenty years later I discovered where he got the second diagnosis from: Jean-Martin Charcot's *Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System,* delivered at La Salpêtrière Hospital in 1868. Charcot distinguished disseminated, or multiple, sclerosis from what he called "hysterical ischuria," the symptoms of which mimicked a real paralysis; in Charcot's cases the pseudoparalysis seemed to follow upon a "moral shock" such as being a victim of rape. He also described two cases in which the initially hysterical symptoms seem to have produced a real neurological paralysis, or so he conjectured.

As for my own situation, I had seen the laboratory report on my cerebrospinal fluid, with the increased proteins and abnormal cell count; the cystogram clearly indicated an atonic (flaccidly paralyzed) bladder, and furthermore the neurologist had said that the abducens muscle of my left eye was paralyzed, accounting for the double vision. There was no question in my mind but that my condition was real. And that seemed in any case to be the more acceptable choice: At least it didn't put me in the "sissy" category.

I wrestled with my dilemma for two days until I had a chance to see my own doctor, and he got me out of it. He acknowledged that he and his consultants had considered the diagnosis of an acute, fulminant onset of multiple sclerosis, but they had discarded the possibility in favor of a syndrome called "acute disseminated encephalomyelitis," an inflammation of the central nervous system, usually transient, occasionally seen after an acute viral infection or following a vaccination. So I was covered, and in time the bladder recovered its function. I later read that people afflicted with this illness do have a statistically higher likelihood of eventually coming down with multiple sclerosis.

Gerald Rosenfield is a physician and sometime fish dealer, restaurateur, and political activist. He is currently doing research on the epidemiology of multiple sclerosis.

There's more to the story of my illness and recovery, and of how I wrote the free speech movement article, almost effortlessly, while still convalescing. It was published in two installments because it was so long and, in my opinion at least, it captured the essence of what had moved the Berkeley students to do what they did. Saul Landau and Paul Jacobs, both writers and activists I knew, later edited an anthology of sixties writing that included an excerpt from my article. The excerpt they chose told of the feeling that came over me in the midst of a major civil rights demonstration—having made the personal commitment to risk arrest—of not being alone in the world, of being part of a larger community, of a commonwealth of people with a shared concern for the fate of humanity.

Paul Jacobs was a sort of godfather to our group of fledgling politicos and journalists. He was himself an established journalist and television personality around San Francisco. He was a very busy man, and some said he was self-serving, but when I was sick in the hospital Paul came to see me every day and stayed with me as long as I needed him, as though he had all the time in the world. In retrospect I suppose that was the most important thing that got me through, and also made the difference between the quality of my writing before and after. When my life was at stake, all the members of my adopted family of comrades, as well as my real father—who showed up in San Francisco at the moment I got sick, by coincidence, on special assignment from his regular job in Massachusetts—gathered around me, and that's what saved me, because it saved my place in the world. And it gave me the courage to write what I believed to be the truth of the matter in the face of contrary opinion, the courage to assert the claim of expertise.

So now when I read in a textbook on multiple sclerosis about "the almost ictal nature of the presentation in more than 50 percent of the patients" (how, in other words, it comes on like a sudden blow), and read the example, "I was sitting in a bus looking at a pretty girl when suddenly she blurred and faded out of my sight altogether," I wonder if maybe the pretty girl faded from the patient's sight because the realization was dawning on him that he might never again have access to a pretty girl like her. And perhaps that thought was easier for him to bear if the reason for it was something his conscience couldn't hold him accountable for, an unfortunate illness, rather than a personal inability to take the next figurative step in his life—to complete the next task, to achieve the next goal lying before him. Until eventually, by some as yet unclear mechanism, real paralysis intervenes.

And it is sometimes a question of conscience in these matters: like the time Paul Jacobs suddenly lost his hearing in one ear. It happened while he was listening to Yasir Arafat speak to the United Nations General Assembly, he told me. In the second before the English translation of Arafat's words came through the earphone, Paul was watching his face, and he realized that the man was deceitful. This was of great personal consequence to Paul, for he had helped to arrange a truce between the PLO and the Israelis not long before, a truce that had been brutally broken by the slaughter at an Israeli settlement. The calculus here was that if he'd paid closer attention the first time, or, to pick up the metaphor, if he hadn't *listened* to Arafat the first time, the slaughter might never have occurred.

And later, when Paul was dying of lung cancer—although he had never been a smoker—he said that now he knew what it was like to be physically tortured, particularly by the treatment, the radiation and chemotherapy. Torture was something Paul had written about, as it had been recounted to him by former political prisoners of brutal Latin American regimes, but it had always been easy for him to write about the suffering of others; now he was finding out what it was really like to live under such a regime. In retrospect I think it wasn't only the physical pain, but also the hopelessness of his situation, the lack of a future to look forward to, that constituted the parallel. For Paul the horrors of contemporary geopolitics had been the ticket to a measure of fame and fortune—the year his illness was diagnosed, he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for one of his relentless exposés of how inhumanely people can treat their fellow humans—but in the end he had to pay his dues. And he accepted that.

It isn't popular nowadays to suggest that the illnesses that befall us resonate with our sentient experiences, and it's worse to suggest that they express in some way unresolved or irreconcilable conflicts in our lives. It isn't the psychological factor so much as the moral implication that we find so objectionable in the metaphorical construction of illness. Society, like the individual, lives easier with the ills it bears as long as it is not held accountable for them, as long as they cannot be construed as symptomatic of flaws in the society's character.

It used to be thought that the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis might be related in some way to that of conversion hysteria, a condition characterized by physical symptoms—often similar to those of multiple sclerosis—that have no detectable organic basis, but that can be perceived as the expression of a psychological conflict. However, something critical has changed in the way we look at disease now, compared with the way we did before the discovery of penicillin and before all the other technological advances that made it possible to under-

stand, and even literally to see, the processes of cellular and molecular biology that are the indispensable physical substrata of mental activity. In the process, the art of medicine was eaten up by the science of it, at least when it came to understanding disease mechanisms. Neurological phenomena have come to be conceptualized as prior to mental and psychological phenomena; and now even mental illnesses, the realm of psychiatry proper, are no longer considered consequences of the vicissitudes of the human struggle. The change has been so complete that an assistant director of the National Institute of Mental Health can say, "We used to think that schizophrenia had something to do with early childhood experiences, but now we know it's a brain disease, like multiple sclerosis, caused by chemicals in the limbic system."

In fact we know no such thing. The causes of both multiple sclerosis and schizophrenia remain unknown to medical science, beyond what is still circumstantial evidence for genetic susceptibility in both disorders. This susceptibility, or vulnerability, is often termed a "predisposition," which begs the question of causation. It should also be noted that there is a growing body of evidence that the actual destruction of the fatty myelin sheath of the nerves affected by multiple sclerosis is accomplished by an attack on that sheath by the cells of the patient's own immune system. This is called an autoimmune process. What triggers this attack is unclear, but most researchers agree with the authors of one of the most carefully conducted studies of twins with multiple sclerosis, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1986: "Environmental factors must also be important, since there are many data supporting this view, including the finding that most monozygotic twins are discordant." In other words, if one identical twin comes down with multiple sclerosis, the other, in most cases, does not; so something other than heredity plays a crucial role in the etiology of the disease.

Whether psychological or emotional influences are a significant part of these putative environmental factors or whether it's all a matter of molecular biology remains an open question. Investigators have long searched for a virus that might be identified as the cause of multiple sclerosis, so far in vain. I think that sometimes a molecular hypothesis serves the function of substituting for a missing psychological or sociological observation, as "genetic susceptibility" and "genetic predisposition" remain largely unclarified, all-purpose terms, beyond the attempt to identify such susceptibility with a specific deoxyribonucleic acid in the genome. When Eskimos whose ancestors had for thousands of years eaten food composed overwhelmingly of proteins and fats lose their ancestral way of life and turn to a diet consisting largely

Loosening the Sealed

the words have already been written in
our hearts intertwined—and whether you
will advance in your clarinet and whether
I will continue to hunt up the right words
in the right order as though my life depended
on it

and it does, as does yours on how smoothly
staccato
goes—and if you don't find the proper reed,
where
will the music go—suffering in squeaks

and if I don't rediscover the word for being:
meaning a sentient existence, blooded
by happenstance ...

in this day, all will be sealed: who shall
live and who shall only appear to

who shall carry their spirit around like
a long bothersome tail—vestigial, and
meaningless
saved only by a stroke of history

and with each step, the small bones—brittle
from lack of use, crack beneath the shoe's
hard shell

sometimes, I think the clarinet is your
ebony tail—that you have drawn to you and
refashioned for song—so long

useless, bored now
with stops and metal taps, each note
sounds blue until you take it up

rework the scale so the spirit, so long
trapped within, effluviates

beckons in the direction of the
word I still seek

Sharon Dolin

of packaged carbohydrates from the trading post and then get diabetes, I suppose one could say that they have a genetic susceptibility to diabetes, if one wants to look at it that way. But that is the way medical researchers look at such situations nowadays, because they can deal with them at that level.

Medical researchers make a grievous mistake in discounting the role of subjective factors, of the human struggle, in the etiology and pathogenesis of disease.

There is one exception to this trend. In recent years evidence has accumulated of a functional interdependence between the cells of the immune, nervous, and endocrine systems. Because this relationship provides a theoretical basis to account for the influence of psychological factors on the functioning of the immune system, this area of inquiry has been named "psychoneuroimmunology." Although one group of researchers, at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, has done a set of studies demonstrating an unusual correlation between psychological distress and changes in certain immune cell counts in multiple sclerosis patients, the body of work in this field has not seriously altered the conceptualization of the disease as a process driven by microscopic forces.

No one has ever figured out how to fit subjective experience into an objective framework, although many have tried, just as many have tried to make human behavior predictable by controlling it. The two go hand in hand: the ideologies of social governance and the paradigms of scientific theory. Thomas Kuhn went to great lengths to delineate this thirty years ago in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* and almost everyone acknowledges it, but few are willing to take it seriously when it comes to their own fields of endeavor.

What is required of the researcher is to take seriously the philosophy, logic, and foundations of science, and thus come to understand his or her own area of research in its historical context. Otherwise it is too easy to be caught up by the methods and hypotheses of the moment, and become not the master of one's material, but its creature. That is indeed what has happened to the conceptualization of the diseases of our time, like multiple sclerosis. As Aristotle would have said, today's scientists are looking only at efficient cause, attributing the movement of the leg to the activity of the nerve and muscle, and ignoring final cause, the purpose for which the man moves the leg, that which makes it worthwhile for him to walk.

The newspapers once told the story of a former Olympic skier, Jimmy Huega, who had taken his doctor's advice to avoid physical exertion, based on studies that said that, other variables being equal, an increase in body temperature is associated with an exacerbation of the symptoms of multiple sclerosis. Huega finally got fed up with lying around all day doing nothing physical, especially since the outdoors had been his life, and decided to reclaim his identity as a skier. So he went out and skied and got better, a lot better. I consider Huega's story as evidence for the contention that medical researchers today are making a grievous mistake in discounting the role of subjective factors, of the human struggle, in the etiology and pathogenesis of disease. In real life other variables are never equal; life is all of a piece.

I could have begun this story of how I became interested in multiple sclerosis at some earlier point in my life, such as the week in 1950 that I graduated from high school, which was the week my mother died. It had started a couple months before with a rash on her back that turned into blisters, and it didn't stop until it had taken all her skin. It robbed her of her loveliness, but I wonder whether in her own mind that process didn't begin two years before, after we followed my father out to his new job in Nebraska, far from her home ground, and where there was no Jewish community—where she was at first so unhappy, and unhappy with him, and disappointed with the way her children were turning out, particularly, perhaps, with the way I was turning out. In my mother's house one wasn't expected to be unhappy, and I don't think she ever forgave herself for the fact that our lives were not fulfilling her fondest expectations, her hopes and dreams. So when the white blood cells of her own immune system turned and attacked the veneer that had always appeared so lovely to others, perhaps that was only the fulfillment of what had already become her own self-image.

The disease that took my mother's life is called *pemphigus vulgaris*. It is a rare autoimmune disease of unknown etiology.

I remember a neighbor saying to me after she died, "Maybe you'll become a doctor and find a cure for that disease," which seemed the furthest thing from my plans at the time. I wanted to be a crusading journalist or a fighting lawyer and right the injustices of the world. It was only after I'd become a doctor, to some extent out of the belief that I could never carry off the other choices—it never occurred to me that the practice of medicine had anything to do with fighting injustice—

that I finally looked up the literature on *pemphigus vulgaris*, and ran across an article in a German medical journal entitled "*Pemphigus vulgaris*: A disease connected with political persecution?" In all the literature I've scanned about *pemphigus*, that title is the closest thing I've had to a clue.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Hannah Arendt argued that totalitarian authority requires for its sustenance a class of victims, and the signal quality of that class is rootlessness: a people without firm ties to the land and to the culture they live in. And Emile Durkheim a century ago described the phenomenon of anomie, the loss of normative values, the loss of the emotional bonds between the individual and society, as a factor in suicide. Loss of place, loss of values, loss of the expectation of a viable future: These themes keep recurring in the cases of chronic and mortal disease I have known personally, but I do not find them in the case histories in the medical literature. The works of Arendt and Durkheim are considered part of the canon of political science and sociology, not medicine.

C. Wright Mills, another sociologist, said, "The job of the sociologist is to turn personal troubles into social issues." I have come to believe that in the gap between our knowledge of personal troubles and our knowledge of social issues lies an understanding of illness in human terms, beyond the language of molecular biology and biochemistry.

Or I could have started my story with the case of my friend Kathy, who was afflicted with *myasthenia gravis*, a disease characterized by weakness of the voluntary muscles. *Myasthenia gravis*, like *pemphigus*, is an autoimmune disease of unknown etiology; in this syndrome the immune attack is upon the receptors at the myoneural junction that receive the signal from the nerve that would normally cause a muscle to move. The affected muscle responds only feebly, or not at all.

One day, a couple of years after my own medical crisis, I asked Kathy what had happened to her. She said it had started the day after her boyfriend left for New York. She suddenly got terribly weak, so weak that she could scarcely drag herself around or catch her breath. She didn't say that she was afraid to be alone, without protection, but she went on to tell me about the time when, as a little girl, she was cornered in a garage by a bully cousin of hers who took her doll and flung it on the concrete floor, shattering its head, and then shouted, "That's what's gonna happen to you if you don't watch out!"

Kathy was taken with the writings of Anaïs Nin, who was a godmother of the contemporary women's liberation movement. When Nin came to Berkeley to speak at a symposium on the feminine influence on societies throughout history, I invited Kathy to accompany me to the session at which Nin was to appear.

The emphasis of the session, it turned out, was on how the distinctive strengths and sensibilities of women had come to the fore and become institutionalized when the power and authority of men had proved inadequate to the historical challenge. An example that sticks in my mind is the African tribal legend of a time when the people were suffering from a terrible drought, and all the traditional ceremonies and incantations failed to bring rain. In desperation, the tribal chief passed the scepter to his sister—and the rains came.

Kathy chose to wear to the meeting a dress she'd never worn before, severe black with a white trim: moon theme. When, as the high point of the day's session, Anaïs Nin appeared on the podium, so fragile, like a little sparrow, but so articulate and sure of herself, she was wearing a nearly identical dress. Kathy was ecstatic. I remember her on the way home, swinging around the telephone poles, dancing in the rain. She never had to take another neostigmine pill, although sometimes, she told me, she got scared, afraid she wouldn't be able to take the next breath, but she knew it was only hysterical. The *myasthenia* was gone.

Kathy couldn't deal with her children though; in their early teens they were both on the streets of Berkeley doing what parents fear their children will wind up doing, as the call for liberation was being transmuted at the end of the sixties into the cry for drugs and sex; and she never found another man. When gentrification and high rents came to Kathy's neighborhood, she lost her little art gallery, and, without a place she could call her own, she tried to go back to Colorado, where she had grown up—as my mother had talked of going back to Massachusetts some day. Kathy died in Colorado; someone said that she tripped coming down a flight of stairs and fractured her skull on the concrete sidewalk below.

It was as though that magic moment that cured Kathy of her illness was not enough to save her from her fate. As the magic faded she was left, once more, alone and bereft. A mortal case, perhaps, of anomie.

There was an Italian movie of the sixties called *The Red Desert,* about a woman who has had a nervous breakdown and returns afterward to the industrial complex of the town where her engineer husband worked, the town being what had driven her crazy in the first place. It is an unnatural landscape of machines and man-made modules. The movie is the story of her alienation from it and from its functionaries, among whom, she realizes, are her husband and, with a growing sense of horror, her child, who is inexorably

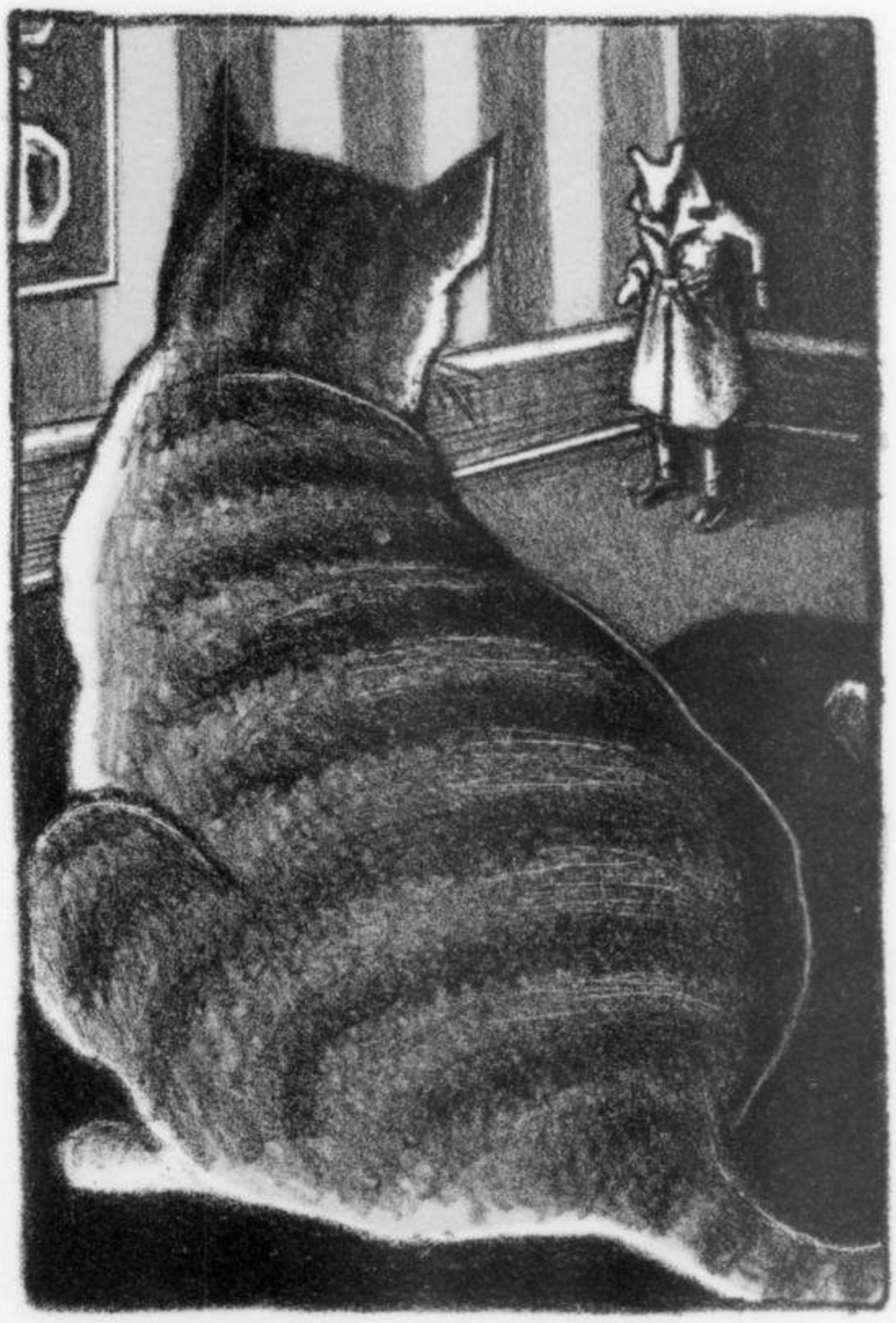
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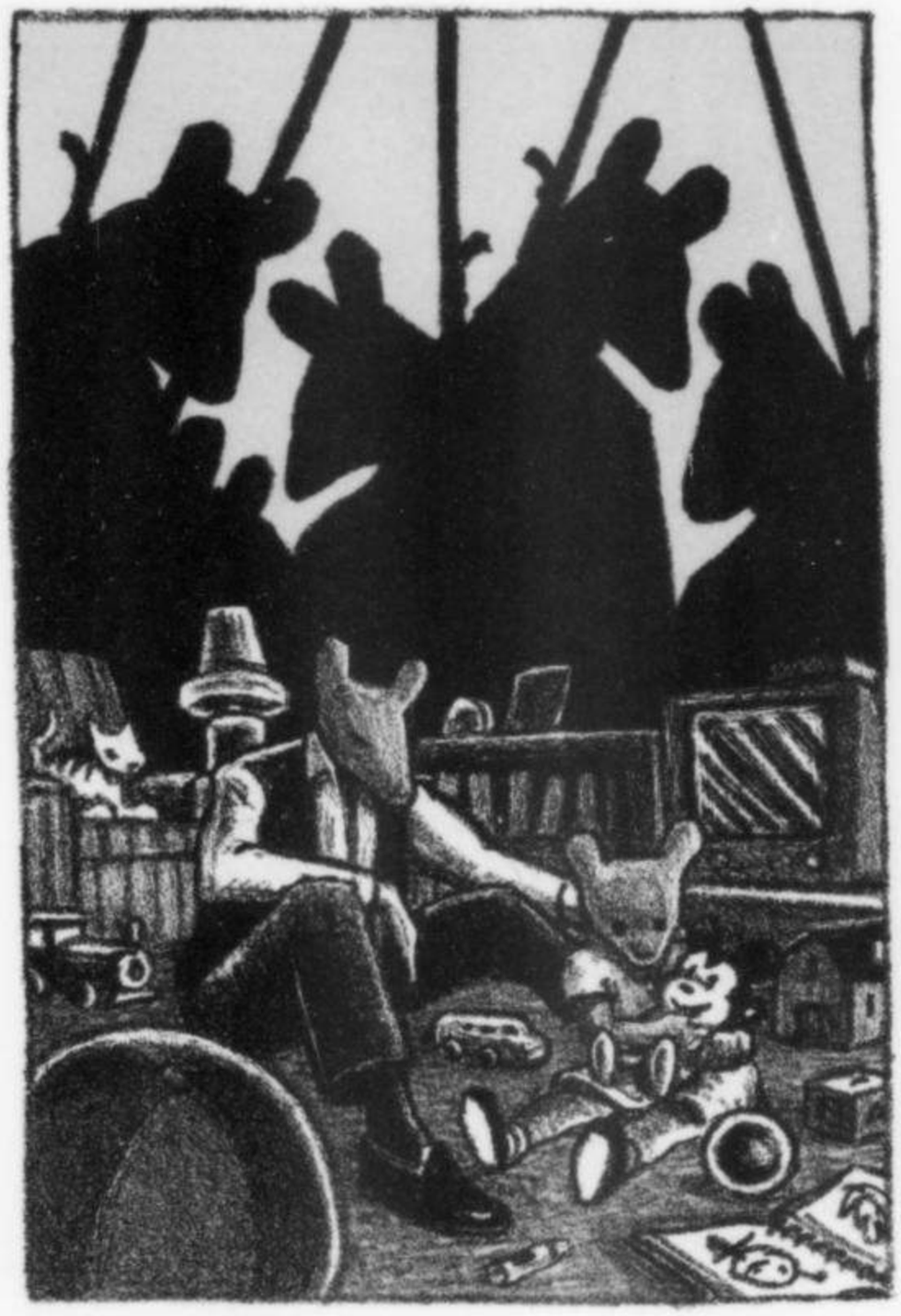
By Art Spiegelman

So, finishing MAUS after thirteen years left me confused. I mean I couldn't just stop drawing mice cold turkey. For all that time I had a focus for dealing with the issues that were important to me—my parents, my ethnic background, the ghosts of the dead—and I could sustain the illusion of doing work that was making a difference. It was comforting to be a man with a mission and to have a project to immerse myself in. Considering the duration of the MAUS project, the post MAUS period feels without anchor until I move to a new project. The following suite of four stone lithographs was part of my MAUS METHADONE program, helping me sum up some of MAUS's themes and continue image making.





U S



MAUS preserves a certain crystalline ambiguity that doesn't try to simplify the complexities of interpersonal relationships and disastrous history ... and yet it comes across in an easy-to-take tablet. The scary part to me is that MAUS may also have given people an easy way to deal with the Holocaust, to feel that they've "wrapped it up," that reading MAUS now makes it possible for them to feel that they understand it, and that's that. And since that isn't true for me, it's peculiar if it's true for people reading my book. But that doesn't mean that I'm going to spend the rest of my life obsessing on one subject.... So, anyway, here are four little MAUS droppings....



Cartesian Lawyers and the Unspeakable: The Case of Vichy France

Richard Weisberg

The Vichy government's crimes against Jews, for years denied or ignored, have recently become the focus of considerable attention in France. So it is unfortunate that Abraham Brumberg, reporting on a paper by John P. Fox at a conference on recent Holocaust research ("Nuances of Evil," *TIKKUN,* May/June 1992) should talk of Laval and Petain's "resistance" and should offer a shocking apology for the regime's leaders (even if the apology is limited to the context of discussing the question of Vichy's so-called protection of "French" Jews as opposed to other unfortunates on French soil).

Brumberg asks how so many Jews could have been spared by Vichy. Far more to the point is the question, as Fox poses it, of how the Germans were able to achieve as much as a 24.5 percent kill rate in France. Given Vichy autonomy, and given the regime's authorship of racial legislation that extended pervasively even into the occupied zone, much of the research indicates that Vichy not only freely sacrificed "stateless Jews" but also threw in their own. For example, the notorious roundups of July 16 and 17, 1942, which have just been extensively memorialized in France on their 50th anniversary, victimized many Jews who were born on French soil (thus Doris Bensimon notes that "3,000 of the 4,051 children arrested on 16 July 1942 were French born").[1] Marrus and Paxton early disposed of the thesis that with all their autonomy, Petain and Laval did more to protect their citizens than did other wretched European leaders.[2]

My own research into Vichy law indicates how free and creative Vichy was in both defining and persecuting all Jews. In most key respects, their racial policy was self-created.[3] It so often surpassed the German models that it was extended to the occupied zone and to conquered foreign territories such as the British Channel Islands. Through a legalistic triad of statutory definition, judicial interpretation, and administrative fiat, many individuals and some entire groups left alone by the Nazis were victimized by the French. Rarely, but on occasion, the Germans chose to slap the wrists of French courts and agencies, which they felt had been unnecessarily harsher than their own courts on the subject of racial definition. Concerned French lawyers began to advise their colleagues to adopt the "broad and liberal precedents" of the Nazi courts in defining "Who is a Jew?" because the German approach allowed more people to be defined as "Aryans" and hence to escape the strictures of the racial laws.[4]

If Vichy pursued anything "fiercely" it was its autonomous racial policy, not its opposition to German demands. Michele Cointet-Labrousse, a distinguished historian of the period, summarizes the now predominant view of the regime:

> The French government resigned itself to a defensive attitude: preserve what was left to it of autonomy—that is, the French racial statute itself—and try to avoid the negative effects upon French public opinion of its practical alignment with the Nazi approach.[5]

To Vichy, which created and then scrupulously implemented its own version of the racial laws, "resistance" to German pressure had nothing to do with saving Jews. It had everything to do with saving French government, French traditions, French law. Central to this enterprise was Pierre Laval, himself a lawyer.

Laval would stop at nothing to further Vichy "values" as he saw them. If the Nazis, for example, demanded adults, the French would take this to its logical extreme and beg to include children on the transports east. Laval did not want the bother of caring for these new orphans, whose fate he either knew (even by 1942) or was at least willing to risk. Eichmann's acquiescence in Laval's scheme was three weeks in coming.[6]

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1. Doris Bensimon, *Les Grandes Rafles* (Paris: Editions Privat, 1987), p. 14.
2. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (N.Y.: Basic, 1981), p. 363.
3. The courageous French lawyer Philippe Serre (one of the few French legislators who voted against granting Petain dictatorial powers in July, 1940) told me in 1988 that "the Germans would not have insisted on a racial policy if the French had resisted."
4. See my *The Failure of the Word* (New Haven: Yale, 1984) and David Margolick's related column on this subject, "At the Bar," *New York Times,* May 17, 1991, p. B18.
5. Michele Cointet-Labrousse, *Vichy et le fascisme* (Paris: Editions complexe, 1984), p. 208.
6. See, e.g., Christian Lepagnot, *Histoire de Vichy* (Geneva: Vernoy, 1980), IV,

Seeking any port in a storm, Brumberg (and Fox) make much of Laval's "resistance" to the idea of establishing 1927 as the last year in which naturalization to French citizenship would be honored. Since Vichy itself (by law, as usual) had independently legislated arrest and imprisonment in its own concentration camps for *stateless* people, the issue *was* important. Once stripped of citizenship, the former French citizen was ripe for deportation. But let's not make too much of it, either: Vichy had already conceded 1933 as the defining year, either on its own or at least without a whimper. The principle of redefining "Frenchness" was already well established in Vichy and must inform our understanding of what apologists have always meant by "at least the French were saved."[7]

In fact, Vichy's basic racial statute did not discriminate among French, foreign, and stateless Jews. Thus the plundering of Jewish property by Aryan "administrators," the establishment of the *numerus clausus* for the professions (also largely a Vichy-initiated phenomenon), the curfews, restrictions, and other humiliations—these steps affected French as well as foreign Jews. Other edicts permitted even the arrest of native-born Jews. By a circular of the Ministry of the Interior dated January 2, 1942, Vichy police were permitted to arrest any Jew who had "entered the country after January 1, 1936."[8] And, on Laval's initiative, children born in France to foreign or denaturalized parents had been arrested by Vichy *in both zones* during the mass round-ups of mid-1942.[9] These included—infamously—children whom even the Germans had dispatched to the "free" zone and who could have been, in many cases, handed over to Quakers for safety and care.[10]

Now we enter the controversial period in which the Nazis and Vichy debated the reform statute that would have rolled denaturalization back from 1933 to 1927.[11] As Marrus and Paxton say, it was on this sole issue that Laval "drew the line ... and its import should not be exaggerated."[12] This thin reed falters as it is exposed to the facts. Remember, first of all, that we are now in 1943. As Fox himself admits, by "the winter of 1942-1943 ... Vichy officials had no choice but to concede the truth of reports of extermination." Second, they sensed that the tide of the war was turning against the Germans. In this context, these limited objections to German demands had less to do with heroic resistance than with coolly reasoned pragmatism. This pragmatism was in part fed by a fear of post-war recriminations against Vichy deportation policies.

If Laval's understanding of both the doddering Petain and the preoccupied Germans allowed him to play for time, it surely had nothing to do with his love of French Jews. He simply saw no good reason, given the Nazis' own willingness to await French legal action, to accelerate the denaturalization process. Yet, during that same summer and into 1944 itself, French police in Vichy—and when their back was turned, the infamous Milice (with whom the government had at best an equivocal relationship)—were still busy arresting Jews. And, as in the less autonomous regions of Europe, French deportation trains rolled continuously, carrying their cargo of French, foreign, and stateless Jews, indistinguishable as they reached Auschwitz.[13]

Finally, and for me most significantly, the denaturalization debate proves again that the German lust for Jewish bodies continued to be mediated in France by a reliance on what I like to call "legalistic Vichy." As we shall see, Vichy's stalling over the 1943 denaturalization proposal serves only to emphasize the power its legal system had always had over German deportation decisions.

Law, not passion, informed Vichy's approach to the Jews. Thus Brumberg is wrong even when he asserts (against his otherwise heroic portrait of them) that "Laval and Petain were staunch anti-Semites." Of neither man is this clearly true; Cointet, among others, flatly says the opposite about Laval.[14] So anti-Semitism alone does not explain Vichy's racial policies, except as they satisfied the average Frenchman's need to find a scapegoat for the humiliating military defeat. The enormity of Vichy's extensive and complex persecution of the Jews is more a function of a kind of desiccated rationalism, embodied in the web of laws, decrees, judicial opinions, and learned articles that fill the pages of French law books for the years 1940–1944. These legalisms, wrought with the delicate and often superficially eloquent subtlety of French culture, eventually extended to both French zones a unique opportunity for the Nazis to minimize their own manpower requirements and watch the French "do it to themselves."[15] At the same

p. 95. For the original documents, including Eichmann's considered acquiescence, see *Poethics,* op cit, p. 186.

7. See, e.g., Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy/Auschwitz* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), p. 408 (minutes of meeting of 3 September, 1942, between Abetz, Oberg and other Nazi leaders and Laval and de Brinon for the French.

8. See Sarraute and Tager, eds., *Les Juifs sous l'Occupation: Recueil des textes officiels francais et allemands* (Paris: CDJC, 1982). This excellent work lists the hundreds of Vichy-authored laws, regulations, ordinances, and edicts relating to the Jews.

9. For a chilling eyewitness account written by a then 14-year-old boy who knew only that his birthplace was France but was arrested by French police with his sister and parents, see Maurice Rajsfus, *Jeudi Noir* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988).

10. See, e.g., Cointet, op. cit, p. 204f; Marrus and Paxton, op. cit., p. 267.

11. For a fine treatment of the issue, reaching quite different conclusions than Brumberg's, see Jean Laloum, *La France antisemite de Darquier de Pellepoix* (Paris: Syros, 1979), pp. 57 et seq.

12. Marrus and Paxton, op. cit., p. 328.

13. On these last few points, see Marrus and Paxton, op. cit., pp. 332f.

14. Cointet, op. cit., p. 204.

15. It is not for nothing that Camus makes a *lawyer* of his super-rational, self-deceiving Jean-Baptiste Clamence, he who managed to live through Vichy without raising a hand in protest. See *The Fall* (1956), and for discussions of Clamence as prototypical of French legal culture in decline, see my *Failure of the Word* (op. cit.) and see Felman and Laub, *Testimony* (N.Y.: Routledge, 1992).

time, it gave the French the illusion of preserving a part of their precious heritage, the logic of Descartes and the aesthetically pleasing rhetoric of the Codes.

The "Cartesian lawyers," not the virulent Jew haters, account for the "kill rate" of which Fox speaks. Once their own racial laws were inscribed, hundreds of relatively normal people in the legal and administrative domains collectively worked through the grotesque structure to its logical conclusion. If, in many areas, these conclusions exceeded anything the Nazis themselves had wrought, so be it. The system of laws, minutely elaborated and scrupulously followed, had taken on a life of its own—cerebral and utterly lacking in any sense of common justice—but a life, nonetheless.

As an internal German memorandum of January 21, 1941 suggests, "the French believe in the letter of the law . . . they do not understand the idea of a clean sweep."[16] Every arrest and subsequent deportation from then on was linked in the German mind to the development of French law, allowed to work autonomously according to a Gallic model that the Germans cleverly realized would give them what they wanted, almost effortlessly. And, had Allied victories not intervened, they may well have achieved their darkest aims.

Hungry though they seemed to be for Jewish bodies in 1943 and 1944, the Germans in France characteristically waited for French law to make post-1927 Jewish citizens "stateless" and hence "legally" subject to arrest, encampment, and deportation. No action would be taken until Vichy law moved; but then, *Vichy law had always managed to move toward and beyond Nazi expectations.* Deportations of the newly exposed—but previously "French"—Jews would begin soon enough.[17] They could not foresee that the old marshal, his conscience finally pricked, would insist on a case-by-case amnesty power over once-French Jews. Laval advised the Germans that Petain could not be expected to sign the bill.[18]

But Laval himself, along with the Vichy justice minister, *did* sign the bill on June 22, 1943![19] Even with the Nazis at their most demanding, Laval's signature on the draft bill almost proved enough. Although throughout that summer Laval brought to their attention Petain's continuing unwillingness to sign the edict, the Nazis proceeded to use the "law" (for now this is how they referred to it) to define and deport denaturalized Jews.[20] Laval's sinister maneuvering had gained the newly defined "stateless" Jews a bit of time. Sadly, in light of the deportation of some twenty three thousand French Jews,[21] Laval's "resistance" accomplished only this: the Nazis, for the first and only time, were forced to employ the sick spirit, rather than the logical letter, of Vichy law.

Vichy's lesson for us is particularly acute because the values of French constitutional law, most of which remained on the books during Vichy, are similar to many that we hold dear. Yet first principles are often redefined during moral crises. What happens, particularly among professionals like lawyers and scholars, is that the rational bases of their training become a moral end in themselves, while previously precious principles become devalued. People like you and me put on our professional masks. Paradoxically, this is simpler when the system (as in France and the United States) appears to have been idealistic to begin with. Thus people who were hitherto morally sensitive might actually use their allegiance to law to propound a system that would have seemed grotesque just months or years before. Their idealism was focused on a narrow band of issues: "Is an individual with two Jewish and two non-Jewish grandparents to be considered a Jew?" replaced "Does our legal system permit such an inquiry?" an equally legalistic question but one asked only by a tiny minority of French lawyers during Vichy.

Could the same thing happen here? Well, a look at American antebellum law books indicates that it already has.[22]

Ethical excellence must be infused into our professional practice, and into our teaching of the post-Holocaust generations. Perhaps the first lesson of Vichy is that we must rip away the mask of professional narrowness in times of crisis and force ourselves to see the larger issues that are in fact a part of that practice if we would only address them. "Moral neutrality" does not exist in professional practice. We—like Laval—are always powerful enough to define our own professional perspective. Like the French who served Vichy, we are solely responsible for the focus we bring to our words and deeds.

Let us not be remembered, when faced with millenial issues, for having quibbled about the difference between 1933 and 1927. To avoid Vichy's myopia, we must think of it as a negative example, and not a model of moral resistance. □

16. Memo from German Ministry in Paris, Yad Vashem doc. # V 59.
17. See German documents from that summer, CDJC, ## XXVI-72, XXVII-26 and 27. See also Nuremberg document #44 (RF 1230).
18. German minutes of meeting with Laval and Bousquet of August 14, 1943, CDJC, #XXVII-36. See also Petain's memorandum of August 24, 1943, CDJC #XXVII-38.
19. See, e.g., CDJC # XXVII-28.
20. See, e.g., CDJC # XXVII-33; YV (Klarsfeld notebook #) 1.211.
21. See Andre Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l'Occupation* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 253.
22. See especially Robert Cover's seminal *Justice Accused: Antislavery and the Judicial Process* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1975).

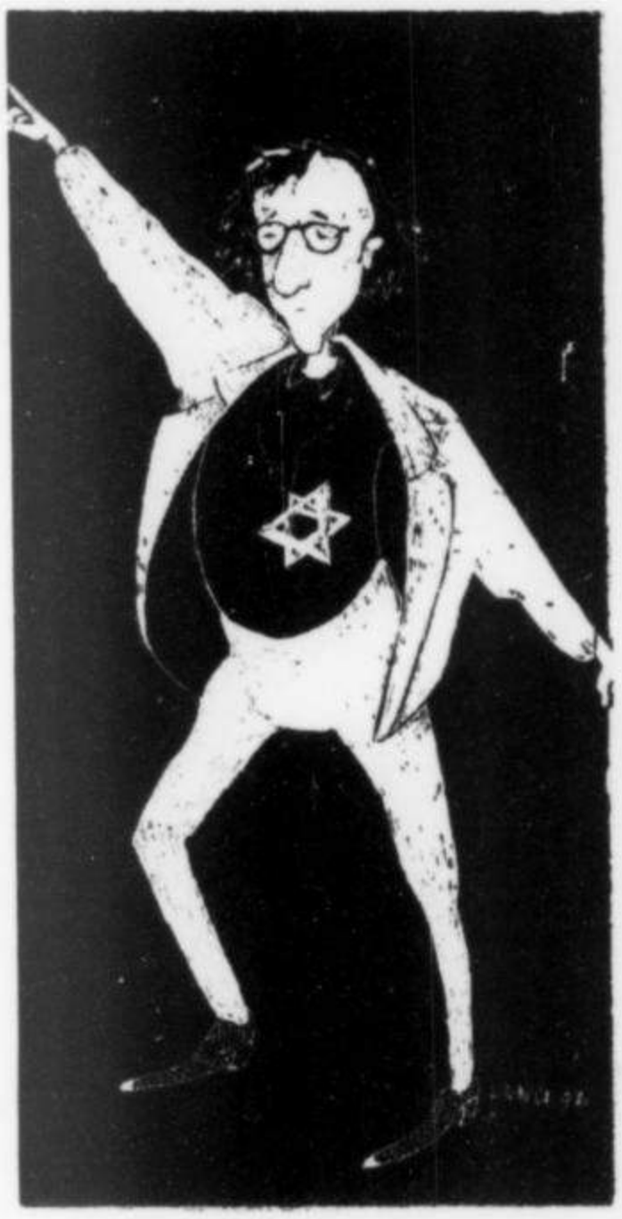
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Erratum: We apologize to Daniel Pipes of the Foreign Policy Research Institute for incorrectly describing him in our May/June issue as a "right wing ideologue"

Eros and the Jews

David Biale

American Jews are highly conflicted about many aspects of their identities, but perhaps nothing arouses as much ambivalence as the question of sexuality. Whether it be in the novels of Philip Roth or the films of Woody Allen, the stereotype of the male Jew as sexually obsessed and neurotic has become a cultural commonplace. Here we meet the Jew as sexual schlemiel, driven by an enormous libido but comically unable to attain his erotic obsession: the mythical shiksa. Erotic fulfillment lies with the gentile Other, but the Jew remains trapped in a kind of verbal impotence: He can talk about sex, but he can't do it.



When popular American Jewish culture is not searching for Eros among the gentiles, it frequently finds it only among Jews in other places and other times. Chief among these are the new Israelis. Beginning with Leon Uris's *Exodus,* a host of pulp novels have projected sexual potency on Zionism. The Israeli heroes and heroines of these books are portrayed as highly erotic, "tough Jews" who have overcome the impotence of the Diaspora. In *Exodus,* the hero is named Ari Ben Canaan, a quite deliberately non-Jewish name—indeed, a name that conjures up the ancient Canaanites as opposed to the Jews. Ben Canaan is ascetic and fanatical, but as a prototypical sabra, he has his hidden romantic side which is revealed in his affair with Kitty, a gentile American nurse. Zionism, it seems, has liberated the Jew not only from sexual neurosis, but has turned him into a quasi-goy. Where the characters of much American Jewish fiction cannot realize healthy erotic relationships with the Christian women they pursue, the Israeli has no such difficulty. Only in Israel can the desired relationships with non-Jewish women find realization by turning Israeli women into powerful "non-Jewish Jews," like their male counterparts: women with guns.

Yet, American Jewish culture does not consist only of such novels and films. In the writings of American Jewish theologians, one finds quite the opposite portrait of the relationship of Jews to sexuality. In a kind of modernist apology, writers such as the Orthodox Rabbi Norman Lamm, the Conservative Rabbi Robert Gordis, and the Reform Rabbi Eugene Borowitz all lay aside their other differences to agree that the Jewish tradition has a healthier attitude toward the erotic than does Christianity. No neurosis is to be found here, but rather an affirmation of the "joy of sex" within the framework of traditional marriage. Here is a peculiarly Jewish version of that "innocent ecstasy" celebrated by certain American Christian preachers. Thus, even though these Jewish theologians claim to represent the historical Jewish tradition, they have reframed it according to a singular American ethos, and as such, their writing is an attempt to negotiate the assimilation of Judaism to American culture: the Jews have the most authentically "American" version of sexuality.

Such, then, are the outlines of a culture in conflict over its own sexuality. Does Judaism repress or affirm the erotic? Behind this question lies another with fateful consequences for the future of the Jews: will Jews find erotic fulfillment among themselves, or only by turning toward the outside, toward the mythical temptations of the non-Jew?

The question of whether Judaism represses or affirms sexuality can only be answered by turning to the long course of Jewish history, as I have tried to do in my book, *Eros and the Jews,* on which this essay is based. Yet this very way of formulating the question may be misleading. Categories like "repression" and "gratification" are modern—Freudian even—and they may not be relevant to the way earlier cultures thought about themselves. Each historical period must be al-

David Biale's new book, Eros and the Jews, *is being published in September by Basic Books. This essay, which is based on the book, is published here by permission of Basic Books.*

lowed to speak for itself and define its own concerns. Thus, for example, the Bible, in all its complexity, is concerned primarily with a theology of procreation: what is the appropriate behavior to guarantee divine intervention in Israel's history so that a small, threatened people can survive demographically? To be sure, many of the Bible's concerns seem quite modern, notably a constant struggle with the problem of intermarriage. But it would be highly anachronistic to describe the biblical view of sexuality as either "repressive" on account of the sexual prohibitions in the Levitical laws or, conversely, "affirming" on account of a poem like the Song of Songs.

My central argument is that the Jewish tradition cannot be characterized as either simply affirming or repressing the erotic. Jewish history is the story about the *dilemmas* of desire, the struggle between contradictory attractions, rather than an account of one, monolithic dogma. As such, it is the story of a profoundly ambivalent culture.

The main ambivalence in this culture, from the biblical to the modern periods, is the tension between procreation and sexual desire in a culture which required that everyone marry. Is sexual fulfillment an end in itself, or is it to be subordinated to other goals beyond the individual, whether a theology of fertility in the Bible, a divine commandment in rabbinic law, a mystical theosophy in the Middle Ages, or the building of a nation-state in modern Zionism? Each period of Jewish history answered this question differently, but in each case, Jewish culture was characterized by conflict between different voices. A cultural elite, almost exclusively male, wrote the canonical literature, some of which was read widely but large portions of which, such as medieval philosophy and mysticism, were only accessible to the elite itself. Yet throughout Jewish history, dissident voices, including women and popular culture, consistently challenged the canon with their visions. No cultural elite arises in a vacuum. On the contrary, the so-called "normative" tradition is always embedded in a social matrix, in part defining it, and in part struggling against it. I see this tension not as a conflict between a "normative" system and deviants, but rather as reflecting conflicting cultures whose possibilities and conflicts were often far greater than the authoritative norms themselves might suggest.

Let me illustrate what I mean with some examples from the biblical period. The Levitical laws clearly proscribe certain sexual relationships as incestuous, yet the narrative traditions in the Bible frequently subvert these laws. In Genesis 38, Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, seduces her father-in-law in order to conceive a child; one of the twins she produces by this forbidden union is an ancestor of King David. Similarly, the great-grandmother of David is Ruth the Moabite, a nation prohibited to the Israelites according to Deuteronomy. Indeed, both David's origins and his progeny are bound up in subversions of the sexual laws: his son Solomon, arguably Israel's greatest king, was the product of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. In these stories, one senses a culture at war with its own legal system, as if the very existence of the monarchy was dependent on suspension of the law.

This struggle between law and narrative in the Bible can be traced in other forms during later periods of Jewish history. In both Northern Europe and Spain during the Middle Ages, popular culture often competed with the rabbinic elite around questions of sexual norms. We can find traces of this culture in such sources as folklore and court records. Among the Ashkenazi Jews, Yiddish literature attests to a dynamic erotic culture that prevailed among the folk, one which rabbinic authorities sometimes affirmed and sometimes sought to restrain. In Spain, court documents demonstrate that relations between Jews and Christians were not uncommon, which led the Jewish mystics of the thirteenth century to denounce such relations by describing their deleterious effects on the divine itself. Yet these same mystics indirectly testified to the attractions of sexual transgressions by allowing the divine emanations, or *sefirot,* to engage in sexual acts between themselves that are forbidden to humans. Thus, the very obsession of the mystics with sexual relations within the divine realm must have been the product of the conflict this elite experienced over sexual behavior.

The elite which produced most of premodern Jewish culture was almost exclusively male. A history of Jewish sexuality is therefore inevitably concerned with the way these male writers viewed their own sexuality, as well as the sexuality of others, whether women, gentiles, or the unlearned. With very few exceptions, what we know of women's sexuality was filtered through male eyes; even the *tehinot,* the women's prayers written in Yiddish, were often composed by men, sometimes masquerading as women.

What does it mean for the history of sexuality to have only such a one-sided, male perspective? If feminist theory is correct that men's and women's experiences of sexuality are fundamentally different, the way in which an all-male cultural elite imagines the erotic will not be the same as it would if that elite included women. Might it be that the struggle with asceticism which so dominated Jewish culture from Hellenistic times onward reflected a particularly *male* set of concerns? Would women have defined the problem in quite this way if

they had produced their own erotic culture? We might compare the Jewish tradition with the Christian, which, since it carved out an official place for female religiosity, preserved women's as well as men's voices. Yet, because Christianity put such a high value on celibacy, women often had to renounce their sexuality in order to find a place in the religious order; in fact, since Christian asceticism sometimes defined the celibate state as "becoming male," women had to renounce their gender as well. Female experience in the Church was therefore frequently shaped by male concerns, although male domination did not entirely erase the distinctive perspective of women from the history of Christian spirituality.

The Jewish case is much more difficult, because women's voices were much less commonly preserved. Since this was a culture in which knowledge was one of the main forms of power, the exclusion of women from the creation of texts—our main source of historical knowledge—is a sign of their exclusion from power. Yet the situation is not as hopeless as it might appear at first glance. Although folklore and court records, to take two examples, were written and transmitted primarily by men, they contain unmistakable traces of women's voices. Even in the canonical texts, male writers often projected onto women points of view, sometimes subversive and radical, which they were not prepared to express as their own. At times, patriarchal and anti-patriarchal voices compete in the texts, as in the conflict between law and narrative in the Bible. Only in the modern period, though, do we discover attempts by women to recover their own erotic voices, a movement which is central to our culture today.

If Jewish history is really the record of a multifaceted culture in conflict with itself, neither can such a history be written in a vacuum. The Jews were always part of a larger cultural sphere. Too many histories of the Jews unconsciously fall back on the theology of Jewish uniqueness and assume that what governs the development of the culture is an autochthonous textual tradition. Jewish attitudes toward sexuality were certainly the product of a textual tradition, yet the tradition was always open to external influences, for the Jews always lived as part of larger societies. An old Arabic proverb has it that "men resemble their own times more than those of their fathers." Whether the larger culture was Canaanite, Roman, medieval European, or modern nationalist, the way in which the Jews constructed sexuality reflected the issues of their times, even as their vocabulary was often inherited from their ancestors.

Perhaps the major issue with which Jewish culture persistently struggled from the period of the Talmud onward was sexual asceticism. Renunciation of sexuality was an important theme in both Greco-Roman and Christian culture. Although the rabbis of talmudic times proclaimed that all men must marry and procreate, they could not escape their larger culture in which the sexual act itself had become problematic. Rabbinic literature reflects this constant conflict between the duty to procreate and the suspicion of the sexual. Indeed, the very proclamation of a *commandment* of procreation hints at the possibility that some might have considered celibacy more spiritually virtuous. Some of this conflict can also be found in the rabbis' visions of the end of time when, according to one saying, there would be "neither eating, drinking, nor procreation." To command sexuality in this world—but then construct an ideal world that was asexual—suggests how great the tensions were in rabbinic thinking.

Erotic desire operates in a constant tension between attraction to what is familiar and to what is different, even forbidden.

The rabbis referred to the sexual impulse as the *yetzer hara,* a term which might be translated as "evil desire." Without this problematic drive, which closely resembles the Stoic view of the passions, men would not "build houses, marry a wife or have children," as one rabbinic text puts it. Sexual desire does not only create the potential for evil; it is in some sense *intrinsically* evil. Thus the rabbis argue that permitted acts of sex must be hedged by a variety of constraints to promote modesty and moderation.

Let me illustrate this conflict between sexual gratification and restraint by an amusing story told of a teacher and his disciple:

> Rav Kahana lay under the bed of Rav who was carousing and speaking frivolously with his wife of sexual matters; afterward, [Rav] had intercourse with her. Rav Kahana said to Rav: "You appear to me to be like a hungry man who has never had sex before, for you act with frivolity in your lust." He [Rav] said to Kahana: "Are you here? Get out! It is improper for you to lie under my bed!" [Kahana] said to him: "This is a matter of Torah and I must study." (b. Berakhot 62a)

This text must be taken, on one level, as a humorous critique of overzealous discipleship. But it also reflects a very real tension between two points of view, which represent the polarities of rabbinic thought on sexuality. On

the one hand, Kahana is shocked at Rav's behavior, which seems to violate rabbinic prescriptions to be found elsewhere. But if this is, indeed, a "matter of Torah," perhaps Kahana has learned something about how one should, in fact, behave. These contradictory possibilities cannot be resolved, and I would rather argue that they reveal the very ambivalences in rabbinic culture toward both sexual practices and the degree to which the rabbis might succeed in controlling them.

Under the influence first of philosophy and then of mysticism in the Middle Ages, the ascetic pole of rabbinic thought took on new, often more extreme, forms. Medieval Jewish philosophers such as Saadia Gaon and Maimonides denounced the sense of touch and the material world as a whole, an asceticism much more radical than anything to be found in the Talmud. Where the problem for the rabbis of late antiquity had not been the body, but rather the uncontrolled passions, now the body itself became much more troubling. Even the Jewish mystics, who believed that proper acts of sexual intercourse caused harmony within God, were infected by this hostility to the material: a proper act of intercourse must elevate physical passion to something spiritual.

In eighteenth century Chasidism, this tendency was taken to an extreme: many Chasidic *tzaddikim* taught that the highest form of sexual practice was intercourse without any physical sensation whatsoever. Nachman of Bratslav, one of the most radical of the Chasidic masters, claimed that he experienced pain during intercourse, a sure sign of his spirituality. Other Chasidic stories relate how especially holy men practiced celibacy within marriage, a custom attested to in the early Christian Church, but unknown in previous Jewish history.

Thus, as opposed to the apologetic argument one frequently encounters today that Judaism is a thoroughly "this-worldly" religion that affirms the erotic, the actual record since late antiquity demonstrates a constant struggle with the temptations of asceticism. Moreover, this struggle does not end with the onset of modernity. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one can find secularized forms of sexual abstinence in both the Jewish Enlightenment of Central and Eastern Europe and in the pioneering collectives of the Zionist movement. Zionism, which proclaimed an erotic revolution for the Jews alongside a political revolution, was governed by an equally powerful urge toward renunciation of personal pleasure in favor of national goals.

The history of Jewish sexuality cannot, therefore, be reduced to a monolithic message, either liberatory or repressive. The very contradictions and pluralism one finds in the sources demonstrate that there is no one "solution"

(Continued on p. 78)

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Though most Americans commemorate 1492 as the year of the "discovery" of the Western Hemisphere, for Jews it was the year Christians expelled us from Spain, and for Native Americans its was the beginning of a period of unprecedented suffering.



1492

Columbus and the Jews: A Personal View

Victor Perera

Much has been made, in this quincentennial year, of the odd skein of circumstances that linked Columbus to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain. The three caravels—the Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria—sailed from Palos in early August 1492, on the day after King Ferdinand's edict of expulsion went into effect. Ships loaded with fugitive Jews plied the Bay of Cadiz even as Columbus's caravels lifted anchor. The crew of ninety included a number of Jewish converts—or *conversos*—and the ships' logs are said to have been entered in an early version of Ladino or Judeo-Spanish. The expedition's state-of-the-art navigational instruments had been designed by Jews. Ferdinand and Isabella's banker, Abraham Senior, who may have helped sway the Spanish monarchs in Columbus's favor, was among the wealthy Jews who raised funds for the expedition. (Senior soon after accepted baptism at Isabella's request, and took on the name Coronel.) Whether or not Jewish blood flowed in Columbus's veins, his voyage of exploration was to a remarkable extent a Jewish/*converso* enterprise.

What does all this lore add to Columbus's accomplishment? As a Sephardi Jew of Jerusalem-born parents who emigrated to Central America in the 1920s, am I to take pride in my ancestors' participation in the "discovery" of America? Is the possibility that Columbus harbored secret "Jewish" yearnings—as claimed by a respected scholar like Salvador de Madariaga and more recently by Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal—meant to enhance my own identity as a Jew?

Victor Perera is author of Rites: A Guatemalan Boyhood *and the forthcoming* Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy. *His chronicle of the Pere[i]ra family,* The Cross and the Pear Tree: A Sephardi Journey, *will be published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1994.*

From my perspective, Columbus and his voyages evoke a welter of emotions, underscored by conjectures like the following: Would we not, perhaps, be better off if our continent bore Leif Erikson's name, and if the New World had been christened in Newfoundland in the Tenth or Eleventh century C.E. rather than 500 years later on a small Bahamian reef island? Is it not egregious to continue celebrating a "discovery" of one human culture by another, rather than accepting it for the unequal and fateful encounter it was?

My three years of research for a chronicle of the Pere[i]ra family have revealed that my blood kin lived in Spain and Portugal as outward Christians for several generations before the Inquisition caught up with them. In Portugal alone, the Holy Office's tribunals processed over three hundred *converso* Pereiras; two dozen of them were burned at the stake in autos-da-fé. Ninety percent of the Pereiras accused of "*Judaismo, heresia, apostasia*" were routinely tortured; they forfeited most of their earthly possessions to their Inquisitors and were condemned to penitences of varying severity in the Holy Office's jails. Hundreds of luckier Pereiras, among them my direct ancestors, managed to flee the Iberian peninsula to other parts of Europe and to the Ottoman Empire.

In 1646 one of these forebears, a fabulously wealthy distant cousin named Abraham Israel Pereira, found safe haven in Amsterdam and proclaimed his Jewish origins. After establishing himself as a respected merchant and elder of the new Dutch Sephardi congregation, Pereira published two tracts in which he severely chastised Jews who fell prey to old habits and returned to the "lands of idolatry." He soon after became famous in the Holy Land after he founded two yeshivas there, one in Jerusalem and another in Hebron.

This same Abraham Pereira participated in the excommunication of Sephardi philosopher Baruch Spinoza for the unforgiven apostasy of denying *Yahweh* and the primacy of the Torah; inspired by Descartes and Hobbes as well as Maimonides, Spinoza postulated God as an omnipresent divinity whose essence cannot be apprehended through scripture, miracles, revelation, or any other *a posteriori* proof. Spinoza believed that all that is exists in God, and nowhere else, and nothing can be conceived of or known outside of Him. The human mind, endowed with its own spark of divinity, is uniquely capacitated to grasp God's immanence in nature.

Two hundred years later my great grandfather, Yitzhak Moshe Perera, a kabbalist rabbi, departed Salonika for Jerusalem to fulfill his prophetic destiny. In the mid-nineteenth century, Salonika boasted the most self-sufficient and one of the most important Sephardi communities since the Jewish golden age in Spain. But Yitzhak Moshe believed, like Yehuda Halevi, that only in the land of Canaan can a Jew live to the fullest the precepts of the Torah and participate in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

In Jerusalem, Yitzhak Moshe wrote a testament to his sons and his descendants: He threatened them with three degrees of excommunication—*nidui, herem,* and *shamta*—if they dared leave Eretz Yisrael for the lands of idolatry. When his first born son, my grandfather Chaim Aharon Perera, defied his father's commandment and traveled to Alexandria as a religious emissary, he paid a terrible price. Chaim Perera died in impoverished neglect of an infected boil, or *grano* as my embittered Jerusalem aunts refer to it to this day. On arriving in Alexandria to recite the Kaddish, my father was told Chaim Perera died because he could not afford to pay a doctor to lance his boil.

In the mid 1920s my father, his two brothers, and their eldest sister shipped to America to pick the gold from the paving stones. (My mother followed a few years later.) They were apparently unaware that they were closing one circle and opening another, for they carried to the New World the seed of the patriarch's curse.

It is against this backdrop that I weigh the issues of Columbus's "Jewishness" and of his ambiguous legacy. But there are other considerations, connected to my place of birth.

Although my father and his siblings fared better in Mexico and Guatemala than their father had in Alexandria, their business successes were shadowed by misfortune. (*"Como la estrella mia"*—like my star—my mother intoned in Ladino, at each new stroke of bad luck.) Madness surfaced in two generations of Perera women, while the most promising first born son died in a freak accident at the age of thirty-four. Two of the three brothers who emigrated to America suffered incapacitating strokes and heart attacks before they turned sixty; the third, my uncle Nissim, lingered in a crepuscular senescence for nearly twenty years following the death of his first born, Jaime. It was years before I traced my father's erratic comportment in Guatemala to a subliminal and cancerous guilt. It seems likely that, when he gave it any thought at all, my father tried to dismiss his grandfather's stern commandment as a product of kabbalist superstition. In Jerusalem, however, father had begun as a teacher of Torah and an apostle of Zionism. It could only have deepened his unease when he realized his first born son was growing up as a New World Marrano.

Only my uncle Nissim was still alive when my aunts showed me their grandfather's testament in Jerusalem. It had been framed and tacked to the wall of their home in

Yemin Moshe, below Moses Montefiore's windmill. When I reminded Uncle Nissim of that document during a lucid interval, he shrugged sorrowfully and remarked, "There are things in this life we can never comprehend." It struck me that Uncle Nissim's prolonged twilight was more likely the result of a delayed shock of recognition than it was an effect of his arteriosclerosis.

Uncle Nissim died a few years later in Guatemala City at age 83, the longest-lived of the Perera brothers by more than two decades. Among his last coherent pronouncements was a request—spoken in Ladino—that he be taken to his old family home below Montefiore's windmill. Rachel and Reina, my two surviving Jerusalem aunts, are convinced Uncle Nissim's soul will know no repose until his body is interred in the family grave site on the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem's Golden Gate.

Determined to become modern Jews and put centuries of "superstition" behind them, my father and his younger brother Nissim had opened a department store in Guatemala City and devoted themselves to becoming rich. For a decade or so they held to their youthful pledge to return one day to Eretz Yisrael and plow their good fortune back into their forefathers' soil. But these bonds had frayed by the time I was born. My father, who was regarded by his sisters as Yitzhak Moshe's spiritual heir, paid a gentile doctor to circumcise me rather than send to Mexico for a *mohel;* and he neglected my religious education until I was a year short of bar mitzvah. When they invited my grandmother Esther to Guatemala, she packed her bags, but then refused to budge after my father confessed that they no longer kept kosher and had opened the store for business on Shabbat.

Today, when Aunt Rachel reminisces in Jerusalem about the family's penury in the years of the British mandate, her rancor at last appears to soften. "My brothers and elder sister sought a better life for themselves, and no one blames them for that. But they blinded themselves to the consequences of defying our grandfather's testament." Aunt Rachel sighs and shakes her head. "The Eretz Yisrael of today, with all its religious and political squabbles, with Arabs who want to push us into the sea, is not one my grandfather Yitzhak would recognize."

Aunt Rachel's words made me see my great grandfather as a being of flesh and blood, human and fallible, rather than as the superhumanly tall, white-bearded, eagle-eyed Grand Inquisitor of my aunt's recollections, and of my own childhood memories. Yitzhak Moshe's prophetic vision failed him in the end, like it has thousands of other powerless Jews throughout the centuries

I grew up in the care of Mayan nannies and salesgirls from father's store who sneaked me into church to save my soul from eternal damnation. With an intuition that mystifies me to this day, Chata, my tender Mayan nanny, apparently detected the shadow of the patriarch's mark on my brow, and sought my deliverance in the only way she knew: by immersing me in her sensuality and making me recite one hundred Pater Nosters under the terrifying image of the crucified Christ.

Chata was knifed to death by a jealous lover when I was five, a cataclysm that plunged me into an orgy of precocious Jewish guilt.

After we moved to Brooklyn, New York, Chata's older sister Elvira, who had replaced her as my nanny, joined a Mayan nationalist movement. Elvira threw over her Catholic upbringing when she was past thirty. She became apprenticed to a Mayan priestess, who taught her the auspicious and curative properties of each of the twenty days in their ancient calendar. Today Elvira conducts prayers in the old ceremonial center of Iximché to cleanse her soul—and that of her ancestors—of the spiritual pollution Columbus brought to their world. Elvira and other Mayan sorcerers plan a huge demonstration next month to purify the earth of 500 years of occidental occupation and to protest the very idea of a discovery of their lands by white Europeans. They call the prayer ceremony "Return of the Gift." One indigenous group is seriously proposing loading a huge *cayuco* with Mayan incense burners and paddling off to "discover" Spain and claim it in the name of their ancestors.

Although I myself have survived in the New World, and even prospered, I find more to mourn than to celebrate in Columbus's exploits. What, after all, is there to be proud of in my ancestors' contribution to the Europeanization of the American continent? Columbus and his crew were driven by a consuming lust for gold, and the Dominican friars who accompanied his later voyages were likewise bent on harvesting a bounty of new souls for the Mother Church.

The vision of instant wealth that drove Christians and *conversos* on Columbus's voyages lured my father and his brothers to America. In both adventures, the protagonists sought to escape an oppressive religious orthodoxy.

In both instances, their dreams ended in bitter failure. The vision of fabulous wealth proved as elusive to my father and his brothers as it ultimately did to Columbus, who died in poverty and obscurity after a long illness in 1506. Only my father made it back in his last year of life to the land of his ancestors, where he experienced a brief and solacing religious reawakening. He died and was buried in Haifa nearly as penniless as on the day he had embarked for America some forty years earlier.

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Borges and Spinoza



Borges says in a late poem, "I have spent my entire lifetime spelling out / The dogmas ventured by philosophers." The thinker he most loved was Schopenhauer. Then why did he write two sonnets about Baruch Spinoza?

Borges must have been attracted by the vast scope of Spinoza's project and the difficulty of the corollaries ("a book harder to conquer than Avernus"), by the strongly ethical character of Spinoza's thought, and by the man himself—his asceticism, disinterestedness, and kindness.

But furthermore, Spinoza was a Jew, and Borges publicly admired the Jews. During World War II, he responded to rampant Nazi sympathy in Argentina by publishing an essay (very brave under the circumstances) in which he heaped withering scorn on the anti-Semitism of his countrymen and speculated on the possibility that he himself was a Jew. (His mother's name was Acevedo, common among Portuguese Jews.) In a late interview, he said, "I have done my best to be a Jew. I may have failed.... I have dabbled in the Kabbalah, I wrote a poem on the Golem [see *Tikkun,* January/February 1990], and I have written many poems on Israel.... Many a time I think of myself as Jew, but I wonder whether I have a right to think so. It may be wishful thinking. What is more important, if we belong to Western civilization, then all of us, despite the many adventures of the blood, all of us are Greeks and Jews."

And why two sonnets instead of one? A lifelong habit of never writing one poem on a subject if he could write two or three. □

Robert Mezey

Spinoza

The fine translucent fingers of the Jew
Are grinding lenses in the luminous shadow,
And the dying afternoon is fear and chill
(And one that any afternoon is similar to.)

The thin hands and the haze of hyacinth
Growing wan in the confines of the ghetto
Almost do not exist for the man sitting still
And dreaming of a radiant labyrinth.

Fame does not trouble him, that dreamed shimmer
Reflected in the dream of another mirror,
Nor the timid crush of the young and innocent.

Free of all myths, free of all metaphors,
He grinds the hardest glass: the infinite
Map of the One who is one with all His stars.

by Jorge Luís Borges
translated by Robert Mezey

Baruch Spinoza

Golden haze, the West illuminates
The window. The long-pondered manuscript
Lies waiting, heavy with the infinite.
Someone's constructing God in the half-light.
A man is generating God. A Jew
With melancholy eyes and sallow hue;
Time carries him along the way a river
Carries a leaf on down its rushing water.
No matter. The old sorcerer keeps on,
With sheer geometry, refining God;
Out of his ills, out of his nothingness,
He goes on building God out of the word.
He has the best love, the most limitless,
The love that does not ask love in return.

by Jorge Luís Borges
translated by Robert Mezey

The Expulsion of the Jews From Spain

Michael Lerner

We mourn this year on the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews of Spain. In the continuing saga of Western Jewry's attempt to ingratiate itself with ruling elites, 1492 is being turned into a joyous celebration of the Ladino culture of the Jews of Spain and of Sephardi foods and melodies, rather than into an attempt to force the Western world to make an accounting of how the Christian world could have allowed the Inquisition to torture and brutalize our people. 1492 is the beginning of the modern age for Jews precisely because it so dramatically symbolizes the radical instability of our situation, our vulnerability, and the willingness of the Christian world to use us as a scapegoat and whipping boy.

The expulsion cannot be explained merely as a whim of a particularly perverse monarch or of the momentary ascendency of a fanatical Inquisitor. For over one hundred years before they were expelled, the Jews of Spain were subjected to increasing levels of legal oppression and mob brutalization. So intense were the threats, coercion, and oppression that many Jews *did* convert to Christianity, while secretly maintaining their Jewish convictions and many Jewish practices. These New Christians, no longer subject to the economic restrictions facing the rest of the Jewish people, rapidly rose to positions of importance in the economic and political life of Spain. It was resentment toward prominence and power that formed the background to the Church's decision to bring the Inquisition to Spain.

In the nineteenth century, German Jews invented the notion that the experience of the Jews of Spain formed a kind of Golden Age of Jewish life. History is almost always written to reflect the interests and concerns of its era, and for German Jews, seeking to assimilate into German culture, it was important to discover in Spain a model for Jews who could be both secure in their Jewishness and participate in the art, literature, philosophy, and culture of the larger non-Jewish society. Although there were certainly some Jews who had these kinds of experiences, recent historical scholarship is more inclined to see the Jews of Spain as enjoying toleration but not substantial equality. Our experience with Islam was marked by its own tensions, but overall we found ourselves in far better shape under Islamic rule than under the rule of the Church.

Christianity has a lot of penance to do in relation to the Jewish people, and one place to start would be to deal with the Inquisition. Every church in the West where the quincentennial is being celebrated, certainly in the United States and Spain, ought to spend part of this year teaching its parishioners about the Christian role in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and about the details of what the Inquisition actually did. After one hundred years of anti-Jewish pogroms, torture, and oppression, in 1492 the Christians of Spain ordered the two hundred thousand Spanish Jews to convert or leave within three months. Most left.

Ultimately, it was the same energy and the same ruthlessness that had been directed against the Jews which, once the Jews were expelled in 1492, was then turned by the Europeans on the native peoples of the American hemispheres. The genocidal behavior toward Native Americans was in many ways the externalization of the same rapacious lust for wealth coupled with a violent conviction of European Christians' own moral and spiritual superiority that had been directed against the Jews.

Those who have been brutalized in class societies are frequently encouraged to identify as part of some larger "we" ("the Christian crusader," "the Spanish people," "the Nazi Party") whose well-being depends on the brutalization and exploitation of some designated "other." So the opening to the West not only provided a new way to satisfy the lust for wealth, but also a new frontier through which the anger and accumulated pain of most Europeans could be vented on someone other than their own ruling elites.

Ironically, once Europe had so divided the world that it had no more place to externalize this lust and this psychotic denial of the reality of the other, it turned back once again onto its Jews, finally completing in the Holocaust the logic of 1492.

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Michael Lerner is editor and publisher of TIKKUN *and author of* Surplus Powerlessness *(Humanities Press, 1991) and* The Socialism of Fools *(Tikkun Books, 1992).*

ROUNDTABLE

Commemorating 1492

Sacvan Bercovitch is professor of English literature at Harvard University. Natalie Zemon Davis is a professor of history at Princeton University. Aron Rodrigue is associate professor of history at Stanford University. Sean Wilentz is professor of history at Princeton University. Michael Zuckerman is professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania.

Tikkun: The focus of this discussion is the 500th anniversary of 1492 and its meaning to us today in the United States. This year many Americans will be commemorating the voyage of Columbus to the "New World" and the opening up of this continent to European exploration and settlement. Jews will also be commemorating the 500th anniversary of our expulsion from Spain and the intensification of the Inquisition. This roundtable is convened to ask the question: What is the best way to think of these events now as we commemorate the 500th anniversary? We understand why many people in the liberal and progressive world focus only on the negative consequences of the opening of this continent—the outrageous murder of Native Americans, the forced immigration of African Americans to serve as slaves, the conquest and oppression of indigenous peoples. The influx of Europeans brought suffering and death to tens of millions of people. Yet we wonder if those who celebrate Columbus's 500th anniversary are not celebrating the sense of openness and possibility that America symbolized to Europeans; and more than the symbol, also the reality of a place to which many people could escape, find refuge, and relative freedom. That was true for the Jewish people, and for many others as well. And while we are aware that many of the freedoms we now celebrate in the U.S. were not given by America's ruling elites but rather won through intense struggle, most notably the struggle against slavery, we nevertheless feel that America's celebrations of itself ought to be respected and not as completely invalidated. So we pose this question not only as an historical question but also as a question of contemporary culture and politics: How ought we to commemorate 1492, how ought we to think of it and of its consequences for the contemporary world?

Zuckerman: We see in the Columbian venture the proclivities of the West for exploitation, cultural imperialism, and incompetence in understanding other cultures or coexisting with them. With 500 years of perspective, what we might try to focus on now is an effort to overcome the cultural baggage we brought with us 500 years ago and continue to embody in our cultural life now.

The West has a singular inability to live with pluralism, to live with multiple gods. Since the fifteenth century there have been bloody struggles to impose our conception of the "true god" and an inability to accept other ways of life. We've been struggling with that in the twentieth century, but the struggle has a long way to go. It's sobering to rethink the Columbian voyage, and the trepidatious celebration of the quincentennial is one measure of that slow and painful assumption of responsibility.

Wilentz: In thinking of the negative accounts of Columbus's arrival, we should note that this is not so new, that there was a debate among French philosophes in the middle of the eighteenth century over whether America was a vast mistake, a terrible catastrophe. The philosophes argued that the exchange, disastrous for the natives and slaves, also hurt Europe; that what they received was syphilis, wars, tobacco, and sugar that undermined European health.

Current research now indicates that as a result of the contact with the West somewhere between 40 to 60 million people died. The prime agents were microbes, as well as marauders.

The question is whether we must focus only on this monumental slaughter or whether we can also notice the redeeming aspects of what came out of the American experience. Some of those redeeming features began to take shape in the American Revolution and the formation of the United States, were redefined in the Civil War, and are still not completely realized. There's a continuing struggle to further develop those liberatory aspects of the American experience. So we ought not to limit our assessment of the American experience by seeing it only through the frame of the undeniable catastrophe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Davis: I approach this question through the framework of some new research I've been doing where I've been looking at issues as an historian, a woman, and a Jew. I've been examining the lives of a seventeenth century Catholic woman who went to convert all the native peoples (she hoped) of Canada to Catholicism and a seventeenth century Protestant naturalist who went to Surinam and used Native American and African slaves to help her with her entomology.

My being a Jew has been relevant in two ways: first, to try to understand why some of the Iroquois, Huron, and Algonquin peoples decided to become Christian in that first generation (a generation in which there was a great deal of loss of life because of smallpox, but not because of economic exploitation, as was the case in Mexico), and second, to understand the role of Jewish plantation owners in Surinam. My conclusion is that we ought to look at these issues from the standpoint of the agency of the peoples involved, and also see the tragedy and paradox.

With the group of Native Americans in the first generation who decided to respond to Christianity, one is struck by the inventiveness with which they seized upon Christianity and tried to use new religious forms, by their experimentation and their creation of new forms. My Jewish past is relevant here. When I find myself shaking my head at how convinced the Catholic missionaries were about the superiority of their system to that of native religions, I remember that as a Jew I was interested in the novelty and experimentation of the Western Enlightenment. So why shouldn't I let these seventeenth century Native Americans experiment also? Going back to the *Haskalah* (the Jewish "enlightenment" in late eighteenth century Germany), Jews have shown an interest in intellectual traditions that differed from their own tradition, and being a culturally mixed person myself why should I root only for the side (in this case, Native American tradition) that resisted the Catholic message? Why not see the openness to Catholicism on the part of these Native North Americans as reflecting a curiosity and ingenuity—these Native Americans in Canada made *choices*. Some of the Native American women had an opportunity for a ritual voice in Catholicism which went beyond the dancing and assisting role that they got in shamanic religion, whereas as Catholics they sometimes led prayers and preached (though not with the approval of the Catholic priests). I don't mean that Catholicism was better than their own religions, but some of these Native Americans were interested in novelty, and they should be seen not just as victims but also at times as agents in the interaction with European culture.

Now, as to Surinam, I found that the colony had been set up in part by Jews escaping persecution in Brazil. The Jews of Surinam were not quite citizens but had a Jewish militia and had considerable influence on the politics of the Dutch colony. These Jews were often plantation owners and owned some of the largest plantations, though the majority of plantation owners were Christian and most of the slaves belonged to Christian owners. Jews didn't dominate the slave trade, but they were part of it. The contradiction and paradox are remarkable freedoms in terms of cultural and political possibilities, but come at the cost of being slave owners!

Bercovitch: One interesting paradox is that from this American history of imperialism, exploitation, genocide, racism, enslavement, and land grabbing, there grew an idea of America that is identified with hope and opportunity. The word "America" radiates a symbolic hope and is identified, the way an ideology or religion might be, with a whole configuration of values, absolutes, and even utopian ideals.

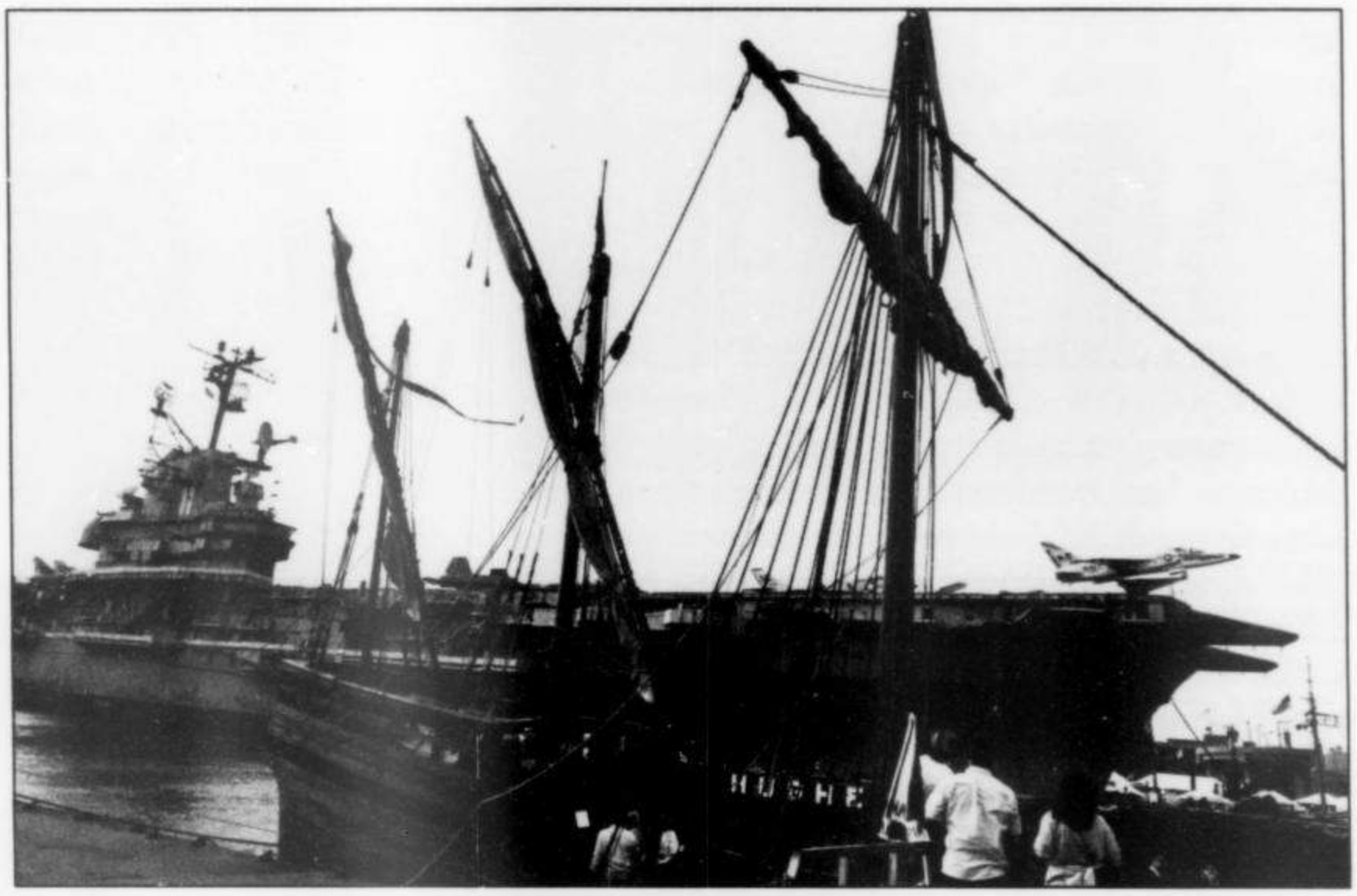
One thing that struck me, as a Canadian Jew, when I came to this country is how the United States appropriated for itself the hopeful associations of the concept of "America."

A second thing was that the United States spread like a religion or ideology. It was once thirteen states, then twenty, then thirty-six ... that is, it's not a distinct territory, not a distinct language, not a distinct culture, but rather it's a certain configuration of abstractions, a set of values. This is not true of Canada or of the Latin American countries. The U.S. has plenty of oppression and discrimination, but it has a rhetoric of openness to anyone who shares the basic American values ... and that rhetoric creates realities, allows for social revitalization and mobilization in crisis for new spurts of social reform. The rhetoric values pluralism, representative individualism, mobility, and voluntarism—and these are a product of a certain fortuitous conjunction between Protestantism, liberalism, and the idea of a new world. One distinguishing feature of the United States is that it is a nation founded by a compact of words. Unlike the Jews who have a covenant based on words, but who also identify themselves by blood and history, the U.S. put forward the notion that anybody could join this American community simply by subscribing to its principles. You become an American not by blood but by consenting to a certain American way (and hence the plausibility of having an UnAmerican Activities Committee). Built on the reality of multiple interests and constituencies, America becomes a society committed to principles like pluralism, multidenominationalism, multinationalism (America as a nation of nations, the place where all peoples converge).

Rodrigue: I approach these issues as a Sephardic Jew whose family traces itself to the experience of 1492, and as a new American. As an historian one has to be profoundly aware of the great tragedy of what happened as a consequence of the conquest of the Americas, North and South. The Christian European attempt to remake "the other" in one's own image was a dominant theme of this exploitation in the Americas and was something that we as Jews had already encountered for centuries. 1492 and its meaning for the New World is the culmination of a form of oppression that we Jews had been experiencing for quite a long time in the Old World—

so if one incorporates Jewish experience when one is writing history one sees that what happens to other people after 1492 is really not surprising, but rather an extension of what had already been happening to the Jews.

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 is a moment of profound tragedy because the largest of all medieval Jewish communities was uprooted and expelled from Spain, but it is also a moment which led to new areas of settlement which themselves became immensely productive of new forms of Jewish life, not only in the West but also in the East. 1492 is not only an end but also a new beginning for Jews.



A replica of Columbus's caravel, the Niña, *docks in New York harbor next to the Vietnam War-era aircraft carrier the* Intrepid.

Tikkun: What is correct in the sentiment of those who argue that this is a time for soul searching for what has happened in the name of America?

Zuckerman: There is a humbling that is necessary. The triumphal story that is normally told in America makes allowances for some paradox and tragedy at our origins, but then quickly moves on to talk about the wonderful openings that developed in American history. But these "wonderful openings" are themselves problematic because of the way that they are linked to a very thin community in a society that weakens social connections between people. This is a world where "getting what you can" and "looking out for number one" are the top priorities, where mutual mistrust tends to predominate—and these are closely bound up with the kinds of freedom offered by the "wonderful openings" that are part of the American story. When people don't have the sorts of security and connectedness that more richly embedded communities sometimes provide, they are more likely to strike out at others. Out of our fear and loneliness we have assumed the role of policemen to the world—and in this way become more of a danger than a hope to the world.

If one looks at the savagery and brutality with which the Europeans dealt with the native populations, the driven sense of righteousness which is not at home with itself, and the way that this brutal behavior goes on for centuries, through the obliteration of native populations and the enslavement of tens of millions of Africans, one has to notice that the society created on these shores by Europeans was at times a symbol of danger and threat to the rest of the world.

Wilentz: But we should also acknowledge that there were things that really have been hopeful in the experience of America, particularly since the creation of the United States—that the rhetoric of American hopefulness is not totally disconnected from the actual realities that have been built in America.

Davis: Perhaps the best way to commemorate Columbus and 1492 is to remember, as Jews are supposed to do, but to remember with a renewed and enriched memory, one that incorporates the range of experiences, from the bloodshed and violence to the hopes that America's realities have generated.

I think there is something to export from America to the world: namely, an emphasis on the fact that the cultural outcome of the United States is the result of a mix, that we have not only a population mix but a radical cultural hybridity. This is not quite a "melting pot," but rather the constant interaction of diverse values—albeit in a context of asymmetries of power. The slaves brought over from Africa and the peoples who were here originally are still present even in a mixed form. Their values are still here, either expressed by them directly, or cannibalized by American culture. The idea of "America"

should be redefined so as to incorporate the active role of people who are sometimes looked at only as victims. So if there is to be a transportable dream from the American experience, it is one that says to the world in a time of intense nationalism that if you want to have an idea of hope it must be one based on recognizing mixture.

Bercovitch: That message should be accompanied by the memory of the destruction of indigenous populations in the United States. In Mexico or South America we have a much greater presence of native populations, whereas in the United States we have a notion of extermination that went hand in hand with the notions of freedom and progress. The conquerors could justify their sense of manifest destiny in terms of these values and hence their right to eliminate populations that were impediments to the progress and freedom that the supposedly superior civilization was introducing to this continent. Americans thought they were creating a new world and that brought with it the legitimacy to bring devastation to the native population.

The "openness" and "hope" and "freedom" that I talked about earlier, which are central to the rhetoric of America, really are very specific kinds of ideals that are intrinsically tied to representative individualism, competition, mobility, a certain kind of liberal pluralism. America can absorb Blacks, women, Native Americans, provided that they conform to a particular pattern of life, and that they define freedom in terms of a liberal society.

Zuckerman: Unlike the Indians who knew what they were doing when they cannibalized, we always denied cannibalization. We never acknowledged what we were taking from the Indians or from the slaves or from anyone else. Precisely the way that we knew ourselves was as not Indians, not Blacks, but without our own identity.

Davis: Perhaps one of the things we could ask from this 1992 commemoration is that we take time to find these hidden roots and this incorporated identity.

Zuckerman: The notions of freedom to which we are wedded work against ever asking those kinds of questions. All through Latin America there are cultures that have done a much better job than we of absorbing and acknowledging the presence of other cultures and other races.

Rodrigue: I'm not sure you're right unless you have a notion of absorption that means taking people and getting them to adapt to the dominant cultural forms and culturally remake them.

America as a failed utopia might nevertheless have the potential for developing human freedom in ways that other societies don't, precisely because we have the rhetoric of freedom.

Wilentz: We have come a long way from the seventeenth century, and there is much more of an awareness in popular culture for the need and value of cultural mixing. So we have a growing commitment to cultural diversity. What unifies the society, however, are our basic political ideas. Unlike Sacvan Bercovitch, I don't think that there's something in the essential nature of America's individualism or American democracy that necessarily ends in a certain kind of political, social, or cultural type or outcome. Those founding words have been given many different meanings, and much of American history has been a fight over those meanings. Certainly immigrants were drawn to America in part because of its promise of material advancement, but also, and not completely wrongly, because they saw America as a place where ordinary people had much more control over their lives and over politics than anyplace else. Democracy always discomfits the monied few.

Bercovitch: It seems to me that we risk overemphasizing the degree to which the U.S. is really open. There are power structures here that are very much in place, with a huge and powerful military/industrial complex. The "alternatives" that are offered to the American people—Ross Perot, Bill Clinton—come from within a particular elite of power, and "politics" has to do with sustaining a certain way of life based on free enterprise. When a group like Blacks or Puerto Ricans have a complaint against the society, the option offered to them is a version of representative individualism—Black capitalism, Puerto Rican capitalism, competition to obtain positions within the existing power structure. It's true that things have been changed in this country, but the changes have often been carefully crafted to strengthen the existing social system.

Davis: 1492 represented a moment when people felt committed to changing things a great deal. The attempt to turn the U.S. into a society to which the little guy could always come over, or into a society that was going to play a democratic role rather than a policing role around the globe—these haven't worked out too well. But think of 1492 as the beginning of new worlds, from North America down to Brazil and Argentina. Not new because Europeans discovered them, but new because these were societies that were dramatically transformed by the infusion of people from different places, and by the incorporation of the indigenous people through intermarriage,

cultural exchange, or through their continued presence. This was one way of thinking about doing something new in the world, different from revolutions, different from divine grace, and different from small scale utopian experimentation. It may not be the most promising ideal around—current reflection on a new African humanism or on multiple identities in India seems at least as interesting—but it is a way to salvage something hopeful from the cruelties and injustice of conquest.

Zuckerman: There's a certain way in which we in America are just incorrigible evangelists. I think it's just ludicrous for us to talk about *us* bringing hope to the world. What celebrating 1492 should be about is adopting a new kind of modesty—not a reassertion of notions that *we* will export multiculturalism or anything else to the world. Look at the Columbian venture: an Italian working for the Spaniards in a marine world essentially Portuguese, with navigators and mariners from every part of Europe. They mixed much more easily in 1492 than people did in the ensuing 500 years, and the whole venture was founded on a profound *European* hope. The multiculturalism and hope that we fatuously propose to bring to the world, the world already had and has.

Tikkun: One twist on this: It turns out that many of those most committed to telling the story of America by emphasizing its ability to create a new kind of society that uniquely allows for the blending of different cultures have been Jews engaged in a fierce effort to assimilate into the American mainstream. In telling the story in its most optimistic way, those Jews are trying to explain to themselves how it could be that there exists in America a universalistic culture into which they could assimilate as an alternative to their Jewishness. For such Jews, it would be very important to see this society as a product of mixing and sharing rather than as a society whose essential features derived from the needs and visions of its upper class Protestant male elite.

Zuckerman: Ironically, the people who were most committed to that story simultaneously were those most fearful about the possibility of new eruptions of anti-Semitism. My generation and that of my kids is worried far less about anti-Semitism and far more about the perils of freedom.

Davis: I felt that my Jewishness and its outsider quality made me less likely to accept the celebratory mode about American society.

Rodrigue: The point that TIKKUN raises about the role of Jews in creating a celebratory ideology is historically true. And Jews in other societies have created similar myths for other societies in which they've lived. In France Jews played a major role in creating an ideology of republicanism and of the French Revolution which provided an image of themselves as both French citizens participating in a universal culture and as Jews able to keep their particularity. German Jews had the same story in their relationship to building a conception of German culture. And Jews did this in the face of a flourishing anti-Semitism in these societies. But given that all these stories are myths, they still raise the question of how to work to make reality correspond to what's good in the myth.

Bercovitch: I share these hopes. I even believe they offer the best prospect for our modern world. But the universalist prospect depends on our awareness that American ideals are also the expression of particular political economic structures.

Davis: I believe that one message that remains relevant is the Jewish command: Remember, *Zachor!* Remember but remember with a renewed memory the range of experience from the bloodshed to the hopes, and not just the hopes brought over from Europe but also the hopes that were in the minds of Native Americans and of Africans who were brought here. Remember in humility, as Michael Zuckerman has reminded us. Have hope for the future, but a hope that is based not only on differences between people, but also on how much one benefits from mixtures and the hybrid.

Wilentz: Someone once asked the journalist I.F. Stone how he could possibly admire Thomas Jefferson in the least, given Jefferson's role as a slave owner. Stone replied, "Because history is a tragedy, not a melodrama." Americans have been presented with a very sentimental, melodramatic view of the past; but historians dwell in the terrain of tragedy, which is why—when we leave our typewriters and go out into society—we are so appalled at the sentimental and melodramatic way that the Columbian drama is presented. But out of that anger at the way the story has been distorted we ought not to create a counter-melodrama of our own with pure good guys (Native Americans, African Americans) and purely evil people (the Europeans). Our memory should lead us to a humility and not to a self-righteous adventurism to which American culture is also prone.

But there is a notion that everything about America is so besmirched by that founding catastrophe that nothing has emerged of any worth. I reject that. There were things that came out of this whole experience that remain worthy of our respect, wonder, and admiration. □

BOOK REVIEW

Crimes of the Overclass

Elliott Currie

The Dispossessed: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present by Jacqueline Jones. Basic Books, 1992, 399 pp.

To "dispossess," according to my Webster's, means to "deprive of the possession of a thing." The great virtue of Jacqueline Jones's powerful history is that it reminds us, forcefully, that the people we now describe as the "underclass" got that way primarily because things were taken from them. And in so doing, it necessarily focuses our attention on those who have done the taking.

To describe the underclass as "dispossessed" is very different from merely calling them "disadvantaged," which implies that they suffer unfortunate handicaps that a benevolent society stands ready to remedy. It differs fundamentally from the assumption that their current situation is mainly their own fault—the product of a self-defeating "culture" that keeps the poor from having what the rest of us have because it keeps them from behaving the way the rest of us do. The latter has long been a prominent view, perhaps the dominant one, in the debate about the American underclass—from fearful discussions of the "dangerous classes" in the nineteenth century, through the pejorative invocation of a "lower-class culture" in the sixties, to the recent, distinctly harsher, variants of the Reagan-Bush era. Given the tenacity of that view, Jones's work will probably not put it to rest. But the book should, at least, put it on the defensive. For her portrait illustrates, more than anything else, that narrow cultural explanations are stunningly simplistic, given the powerful economic and political forces that have conspired to generate America's several underclasses.



Students protest the Rodney King verdict on Broadway in New York City

Jones's subtitle is somewhat misleading; the book isn't about *all* of America's underclasses, but rather a study of the fate of the Southern poor, Black and white, from the close of the Civil War through the great migrations to the North. But that is a substantial part of the story of American poverty. And Jones covers an extraordinary amount of ground—illuminating the economic and institutional roots of Southern poverty and the responses of the poor more comprehensively than anyone has done before. The book is valuable on those terms alone, but it also makes a strong contribution to the current debate about the roots of the urban underclass and, at least by implication, to the search for remedies. Three key themes stand out, all of which are of the utmost importance in the debate about poverty and social policy.

First, there has never been only one underclass but many, "sharing certain vulnerabilities that transcend race and culture." From the Civil War to the present economic crisis, the American poor have been both white and Black, both rural and urban. The point should not be controversial; even the briefest glance at the statistics makes it clear that equating mass poverty with the "concentrated" black urban underclass is grossly misleading. Two out of three poor Americans are white, and more of the poor live outside central cities than within them. But as Jones points out, the current "underclass debate" has focused almost entirely on those who are both urban and Black; indeed, she notes a certain "middle-class fascination" with the flamboyant and illicit behavior of some of the most newsworthy among the urban Black underclass. And the consequences of neglecting the multiracial character of poverty are profound. On the one hand it perpetuates the invisibility of the white poor, keeping them comfortably out of sight

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and out of mind—a situation that hasn't improved much since Michael Harrington described it in his 1962 book, *The Other America*. At the same time, a single-minded focus on the urban Black poor, especially on the segment that engages in "underclass behavior," lends a fast-and-loose credence to the otherwise implausible analysis which blames poverty on a distinct Black culture that is radically different in its aspirations and norms from that of other Americans.

But Jones demonstrates that, ever since the end of the Civil War, both poor whites and poor Blacks have been "caught up in a national (and ultimately international) process that rendered workers of all kinds more vulnerable to the whims of a commercial economy and the idiosyncratic demands of employers." Both in their living conditions and in the way they were viewed by the better-off, the white and Black poor have had strikingly similar experiences. Poor whites in the late nineteenth century were dislocated by the war's disruption of community life and the spread of a cash-crop economy that undercut their traditional independence as small farmers. Yet employers described them as "lacking in industry and forethought," afflicted with an innate tendency to wallow in laziness until hunger forced them into some sort of action. Called "hillbillies," "clodhoppers," "crackers," and "white trash," they encountered housing advertisements until the end of the 1940s in Ohio reading, "no Southerners need apply." Even in the "affluent" era after World War II, white Appalachian migrants to Cincinnati were living in "renovated chicken coops" and comprised the largest percentage of the city's welfare recipients and school dropouts. Later, in the midwestern cities ravaged by the rapid decline of such heavy industries as rubber and steel, unemployed descendants of southern white migrants "began to show similar signs of social breakdown," along with the inner-city Black poor.

But if whiteness was "never an absolute, or final, advantage," as Jones writes, it was nevertheless a significant one. Many poor whites in the Midwest enjoyed much better access to semi-skilled industrial jobs than Blacks did. Their skin color made it much easier for the white poor to escape the taint of their "Southern" origins and to move freely within urban housing markets, "at least as far as their fortunes and family loyalties allowed." White migrants wound up with higher seniority and greater access to the on-the-job training that could lift them into the ranks of the stable working class.

This was true despite the fact that, measured by qualifications alone, Black migrants were often *better* prepared to perform in the industrial economy than whites. In particular, Blacks tended to be more committed to formal education and averaged more years of schooling than did those whites whose traditions taught them not to "rise above their raising." Knowing that the white poor often behaved as an "underclass" and that the Black poor fared worse despite having more solidly "middle-class" values undercuts fashionable, static notions about the infirmities of "Black culture."

The emergence of social and personal pathology in many poor communities is the predictable consequence of the heedlessness and frequent brutality that members of the overclass visit upon the poor.

A second, closely related theme in Jones's book is that the behavior of the "underclass" cannot be understood apart from that of what we might call the "overclass." Again, the point seems obvious; but it's a fundamental understanding that, I think, has been absent in the current debate about the poor. Even liberals often pin the blame on such impersonal forces as technological change and the internalization of the economy. Jones reminds us that those forces are set in motion by real people making specific decisions. By destroying families and communities, those decisions make it difficult, if not impossible, to live a consistently "respectable" life—no matter how hard one tries. In Jones's narrative, those people are plantation and mill owners, sugar companies, and, not least, federal, state, and local officials. She shows compellingly that what the overclass typically regarded as irresponsible and disturbing behavior was most often a response to its own actions.

Take the incessant mobility of the poor, Black and white, throughout the South and beyond, which employers and other comfortable observers saw as evidence of their general shiftlessness and lack of loyalty. This "shifting," Jones shows, was a natural consequence of labor systems that both paid workers too little to survive on and often hired them for only part of the year. Forced into rootlessness, the poor couldn't build a stake, send children to school regularly, keep their families together, or strengthen networks of mutual help and obligation that might offer support in times of trouble. Place is one of the things that was definitively taken from the poor. Without place—without a modicum of stability—most of what it takes to become respectable or to "get ahead" becomes prohibitively difficult to acquire.

Thus, the emergence of social and personal pathology in many poor communities wasn't, and isn't, surprising; it is the predictable consequence of the heedlessness and frequent brutality that members of the overclass visited upon the poor. The most harrowing examples appear in Jones's descriptions of the migrant workers who worked sugarcane in Florida and fruits and vegetables all the way up the East Coast. Their families were "routinely separated in the course of a year, with fathers and older sons, on the one hand, and mothers, older daughters, and young children, on the other, forced to go their separate ways in order to help support the family." Nor were efforts to better themselves encouraged even when poor workers stayed in one place. Employers had no interest in seeing them become independent, and considerable interest in keeping them bound to cycles of labor demand. In the Mississippi Delta, planters "actively discouraged individual households from demonstrating even modest forms of initiative, such as raising chickens and vegetables to eat and sell."

The federal government contributed to this pervasive rootlessness, and its social consequences, in several ways. Right after the Civil War, it enforced the system of labor contracts that kept the agricultural poor "condemned to chronic underemployment," and it rejected all proposals for land redistribu-

tion that might have helped stabilize work, housing, and community ties. More recently, the government's solicitous attitude toward growers and cannery owners allowed them to displace and exploit migrant workers with almost complete impunity. Indeed, migrant workers had less legal protection than did farm animals: "By the 1940s federal regulations stipulated that truckloads of pigs and cows must be watered and unloaded routinely, in transit, but no such laws applied to the workers, like those crammed into a single truck, without room to lie down during a virtually nonstop, fifty-five-hour journey from Palm Beach to Delaware." Meanwhile, state troopers sometimes ambushed migrant caravans and, under the guise of imposing fines, stole migrant workers' small savings.

Finally, Jones stresses a third theme: The poor, though sharply constrained at every turn by the decisions of others, were by no means passive or dependent victims. Too many current observers of poverty—even those who are generally sympathetic to the plight of the poor—see mainly their pathology and not their capacity: "the degradation but not the determination," as Jones puts it. From the Civil War to the present, truly extraordinary feats of individual and family labor have enabled the poor to assemble something like a living in the face of chronically inadequate employment. Outside of paid work, this has included an impressive array of strategies, both licit and illicit, to put more money in the family's coffers or food on the table—from hunting and fishing, which the overclass tends to regard as idle pleasures, to making whiskey. Jones reminds us that the "underclass" has always been a *working* class. Black sharecroppers sent every available family member into the fields, took in white folks' laundry, *and* chopped firewood or cut railroad ties on the side. With or without pay, the poor have worked prodigiously and persistently, doing things that most of the middle class will never have to do.

Jones does not romanticize the poor. She provides ample evidence of social and personal demoralization, from depleted Kentucky mining towns in the 1940s to the drug-infested inner-city ghettos of the eighties. But her emphasis on the resourcefulness of the poor has important implications for how we should think about what to *do* about American poverty. It turns our attention away from viewing the poor as damaged goods and toward ways we might build on the demonstrated ability of the poor to make do against enormous odds. Recognizing that most of the poor have worked hard, tried to get ahead, struggled to keep their families together, and otherwise lived the sort of lives others do, could transform the sterile debate about the roots of underclass behavior. It could even cause us to consider enlisting the poor in a real war on poverty. □

BOOK REVIEW

Across the Great Divide

Patricia Williams

Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession by Studs Terkel. The New Press, 1992, 375pp.
Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal by Andrew Hacker. Scribner's, 1992, 257pp.

In a period of unprecedented racial struggle, the new books by Studs Terkel and Andrew Hacker are fascinating contributions to the kinds of conversations that ought to be taking place in American society.

Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession is the latest of Terkel's popular oral histories; indeed, many of the interviews here are follow-ups to those Terkel first conducted in his earlier studies of workers and of Americans generally. Some characters are familiar, such as Mamie Mobley (Emmet Till's mother), activist Little Dovie Thurman, Dr. Kenneth Clark, and Lerone Bennett, Jr. At least such characters *ought* to be familiar; as Terkel observes about Emmet Till:

> [T]hose of a certain age, both black and white, remember the boy's name and the circumstances. Neither this knowledge nor its significance has been passed on to today's young. To an astonishing degree, when asked to identify Emmet Till, their usual response is in the form of a question: Who? It is not a commentary on them so much as on our sense of history.

It is precisely our own history, like a mirror, that *Race* vividly presents. The 1955 verdict that absolved the men who murdered and mutilated Emmet Till for whistling at a white woman, so easily rationalized then and so alarmingly forgotten now, has much to teach us about the verdict that absolved four police officers in the beating of Rodney King. To remember, to make parallels, to learn from this history is too often dismissed as a kind of "obsession" with race. Terkel's comprehensive chorus of voices and social history recasts the *failure* to study our racial interactions as the real obsession, as "[t]he action of [an] influence, notion, or fixed idea, so as to discompose the mind."

Despite a famous few, most interviewees in Terkel's book are not only unknown, but people to whom individual voice is almost never given: retired parochial school teachers, aspiring rap artists, storefront evangelists, apartment house managers, welfare mothers, trade school students, chauffeurs, and steelworkers. They are rich and poor, angry, re-

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signed, hopeful and depressed, Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and "passing."

A retired domestic says: "What bugs me now, since I'm on welfare, is people saying they give you the money for nothin'. When I think back what we had to come through, up from the South, comin' here. The hard work we had to do. It really gets me when I hear people.... It do somethin' to me. I think violence." A police officer remembers "in the projects someone getting shot on the sixteenth floor and bringing him down on the elevator. Women are riding on the same elevator with their laundry. They don't see the need to get off. Only one of the elevators is working. It'll be a long, long time before it comes again.... You end up stopping at every floor." Rian Malan, grandnephew of Dr. Daniel Malan, the South African prime minister who established the apartheid system, says, "In all my eight years in the United States, I got only one hostile reaction.... Most often, I've been slapped on the back and told, 'Good job.' Especially in cities like New York, cabbies would turn around, clasp your hand, and say things like, 'You guys know how to deal with them.'" The child of an interracial marriage observes that "the real tragedy between blacks and whites in America is not that we hate each other. Hatred by itself is a pretty shallow force and can only cut so deep. The real tragedy is that we love and admire each other. American culture as we know it would not exist if this weren't so." And it is Mamie Mobley who not only firmly resists the suggestion that she might entertain a desire for vengeance upon the white men who killed her son, but very quietly expresses a desire to raise *their* children *right*.

Race is not merely informative social history, but a remarkable and moving literary accomplishment. An improbable yet illuminating conversation emerges, the participants linked only by Terkel's respect for each one, and his commitment to bring them together. It is the combination of all these richly inflected voices that makes Terkel's book a compassionate collection of human witness.

Andrew Hacker's *Two Nations* is less of a literary enterprise but powerful nonetheless. His statistical presentation is admirably comprehensive, examining the comparative status of Blacks and whites in schooling, employment, crime, income level, welfare, marriage, and intermarriage. He also addresses the shifting definition of race itself and the cycles of assimilation that have expanded the definition of "white" to include Jews, Italians, and now Asians and Hispanics. The picture is familiar, tragic, and extremely alarming.

No less than Terkel, Hacker is troubled by the almost sociopathic aversion to history and to acknowledging the dimension of our society's racial division. (I cannot help but think of the Justice Department study, reluctantly released more than a year after it was commissioned in the wake of the videotaped beating of Rodney King, which omitted any information about the race of complainants of police abuse.) If an economic "panic" signaled the turn in social consciousness of the Great Depression, then an eerie calm might be said to characterize the determined refusal to acknowledge the enormity of today's racial crisis. Hacker expends much effort attempting to deal with white perceptions of Blacks, to track the power of those perceptions from individual fear to social ostracism, from disbelief and denial to the continuing exclusion of almost an entire people.

When it comes to race, Hacker asserts, rumor, superstition, and social hallucinations have the power of self-fulfilling prophecies; they coagulate around the lives of Black people and become fact. "Whether the Democrats are becoming a 'black' party will be less settled by statistics than in white perceptions," he observes. It is this elusive taboo, the gap between statistics about Black material reality and data on white *beliefs* about the same reality, that is his most significant contribution. "Longitudinal studies, based on tracing census tracts, show that whites begin to move out once the black proportion reaches somewhere between 10 and 20 percent. Moreover, this happens even when the blacks who move in have the same economic and social standing as the white residents."

Few Blacks, no matter how privileged, ever escape this reality. Recently, fed up with renting, I bought a house. After having been initially approved for the loan over the telephone, I was sent a mass of forms for my signature, including a fair housing form on which the bank officer had checked my race as "white." Before sending it back, I crossed "white" out and checked the box marked "Black." Two days later, I was suddenly asked to ante up a good deal more money, because the bank had determined that the market was falling in that neighborhood. It took me a long time, and the embarrassed prompting of my realtor, before I finally understood that, in what by every other indicator was a solidly rising market in a solidly white neighborhood, I was the factor causing the market to fall. Similarly, another Black friend of mine currently trying to sell her house located in a nearly all-white Atlanta suburb, was advised by her realtor to hide her collection of African art because white prospective buyers might have "unconscious" reservations about using Black people's bathrooms and kitchens. Observes Hacker, "For a white family to be seen as living in a mixed—or changing—neighborhood can be construed as a symptom of surrender, indeed as evidence that they are on a downward spiral."

One of the most pronounced differences between Terkel's and Hacker's books is that of voice. As all history, Terkel's book is vividly anecdotal and first-personal. Hacker, on the other hand, employs the device of the second person narrative to enliven the numbers at issue: "If you are black, these white reactions brand you as a carrier of contaminations. No matter what your talents or attainments, you are seen as infecting a neighborhood simply because of your race....," he muses as a hypothetical Black person. Sometimes this works; at other times, it just sounds didactic. I could never forget that this was Andrew Hacker, white male middle-aged political science professor, talking to me, Black female middle-aged law professor, about how "in the movies, your people had to settle for roles as servants or buffoons." ("You there!" Like a thumbtack through the heart. Pinned. Labeled. *You* can't mean *me*. *I'll* speak for myself, thank you. And yet, don't get me wrong. *I* agree with *you*.)

At the same time, it is clear that the intended audience for this book is not me, but mostly whites, and young white college students to boot. And for that audience, perhaps the induced, albeit artificial, empathy that the You forces a white reader to assume (You mean Me? My People?!) is worthwhile if this "you" to be internalized is a shared body and blood, an imagined community of racial catholicity, as opposed to a Perotian you-there stuffed down the throat of a preexisting me.

I suspect that Hacker's otherwise fine collection of information and insight has received such mixed reviews precisely because of this rhetorical tactic. It raises so many unanswered questions about audience, voice, and the subtler dynamics of the politics of identity. How many Blacks have said over and over: "In the movies, our people have had to settle for roles as servants or buffoons"? Has the larger white world been able to hear Black complaints in the first person, that "These white reactions brand me as a carrier of contaminations. No matter what my talents or attainments, I am seen as infecting a neighborhood simply because of my race...."?

Perhaps Hacker should have prefaced his book as did a Black philosopher I heard recently: "Today I am speaking for whites only." At various points, Hacker does caution against the temptation to use his work to "typify" according to race while also recognizing that "it is possible to point to trends and tendencies, so long as it is understood that they refer to developments within a varied reality." It is a caution that he probably cannot repeat too often, given the current Reagan-Bush–inspired climate of dismissing even the most compelling statistics in favor of hyper-individualized anecdotal accounts of even the most complex social phenomena. And it is a caution well taken in an era when, given the complexity of vast information-gathering systems, statistics are used as often to obfuscate as to illuminate.

The figures indicating an increase in the number of Black single mothers, for example, are too often used by the media to demonize the entire project of Black childbearing and by conservatives to blame some single factor like "welfare dependence." A great deal more might be learned by looking to a range of other conditions affecting the lives of Black women—high infant mortality rates, rape and incest statistics, chronic depression, lack of health care, death by preventable disease, and suicide. And the status of Black single mothers certainly cannot be understood outside of the broader context of data about the lives of Black single men: their mortality rate, their homelessness, rates of arrest, police attacks, incarceration, general unemployment, self-hatred, and homicide. Add into this the greater historic independence of Black women, the general worldwide increase in single motherhood,

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The Italian Synagogue

Even the lattice screen of the
women's gallery
is obscured by my neighbor's
straw hat,
the color of burnt sienna.

Prayers rise on the faithswell
from below
and are crushed against the
windows
in stripes of black and white
sound.

The events
of this past year
diffuse;
a diaphanous ten-day moon
hovers above the pines
remembering nothing.

After the service worshippers
emerge:
a stream of luminous white
beneath trees dusty from
unending summer.

Chatting, they peer into
prams,
kissing bambini
trade blessings for
greetings—
"Have an easy fast!"
"Bye then!"
"Ciao."

"Ciao."
People stroll away pausing at
shop windows,
as if to pick out lives to lead
in the coming year.
They walk home calmly
in the direction of their past.

Aloma Halter

and a growing American impatience with pious moralisms about the virtues of marital bliss and the supposed economic benefits that flow from dependence on a man. Only then, perhaps, can one begin to reconfigure images of shameless promiscuity of wildly proliferating Black women "mocking the importance of fathers," as Dan Quayle has described it, into a somewhat more sympathetic picture of the Murphy Brown "natural woman" model of motherhood—only Black and without the good fortune of a job. Hacker's book does provide the kind of fleshed-out empirical information from which one might begin to draw considerably kinder and gentler social portraits than those of the current administration.

Perhaps this aspect of Hacker's attempt to fuse statistics and something like a generalizable group voice accounts for Harvard sociology professor Orlando Patterson's fit of Rabelaisian pique, when he went off on Hacker's book in the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*. Patterson and his coauthor took Hacker to task for imagining a "late twentieth century prototypical black who wanders on the margins of the white world, a slug on the salt of America's obsessive whiteness ... secretly cursing his genetic destiny for placing him in 'so disconsolate an estate.'" Charging that Hacker presents Blacks and whites as monolithic, oppositional entities, Patterson then described the principal problem for Blacks as how to deal with a "vestigially prejudiced majority" that "may be changing and may genuinely want a culturally and racially diverse society." In supporting this vague contention, Patterson posited unspecified "opinion polls" to counter Hacker's statistics about the shocking material discrepancies between the economic circumstances of Blacks and whites. (For example, a Black male college graduate will earn $771 for each $1000 going to a similarly qualified white; Black male college graduates earn, on average, about the same as white high school graduates.)

Finally, Patterson got very upset at Hacker's suggestion that the "idolization" of Anita Hill, Bill Cosby, and Michael Jordan might be complicated by the romantic distance of gladiatorial spectatorship, rather than easy, upbeat testimony to "the end of racism." But even if this hero worship does mean, as Patterson alleges, that "not since ancient Rome conquered and then surrendered to the culture of its Greek slaves and freedmen has the culture of a dominant world civilization been so enormously influenced by so small a minority of people," it does not necessarily mean that racial barriers are tumbling. The United States has a long history of incorporating Black culture—particularly in the arts—while remaining firmly committed to the dividing line between Blacks and whites, socially and economically. Thus, the enormous success of Black icons should not be used to discount the significance of the figures Hacker presents. No matter how wealthy Oprah Winfrey and Magic Johnson are—as were Madame C. J. Walker, Mary McLeod Bethune, or Jack Johnson in different eras—this nation still has an enormous problem. It serves no purpose at all to allow the wealthiest, most visible Blacks to hoard symbolically all the good will of the post–civil rights era.

It is as though we have arrived at an analytical moment where antiracism, integration, and race neutrality are viewed as virtual commodities, hoarded *things* that have been unevenly distributed, bestowed upon some fraction of 1 percent of the population and locked up in the bank on a shelf, right beside all those millions of Cosby dollars. Perhaps this is the reasoning that fuels the neoconservative argument that it's only a matter of wealth these days; race is a dead issue. Race can be shed with the expenditure of a little money; and race-neutrality is just one more form of currency to be earned and then saved.

This last point of debate is why I found it useful to read these books, not only each for its own sake, but together. Oral, first-person accounts about racism like Terkel's—no matter how eloquent—are too often dismissed as isolated: the result of economic choice, poor or one-sided judgment, or essentialized sentimentality that embellishes for an inalterable social fate. By the same token, statistical compilations like Hacker's tend to be denounced as not true for this or that individual; the attempt to draw a general picture is met by the insistence to deal only with the singular, until all meaning—like the defense's freeze-framing of the Rodney King video—is fragmented beyond resistance.

Read together, Hacker and Terkel cut through this flip-flopping aversion—*Two Nations* with its thorough compilation of empirical data, and *Race* with its cross section of resonant voices. Together, these books are powerful documentation of the confluence of individual and social history, a fascinating combination of both trend and testament. □

BOOK REVIEW

Creed of a Preacher's Son

William S. McFeely

The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume One, Called to Service: January 1929–June 1951, edited by Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, and Penny A. Russell. University of California Press, 1992, 550 pp.

How do we account for greatness? In the case of Martin Luther King, Jr., it is surely a matter of the coming together of the man and the hour. The defiant hour came for Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. But how was it that the young minister of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church was the man? If King had not stepped forward, would no one else have given voice to the determination of people who knew when enough was enough? The Black workers in the city were ready to walk long and far to gain what could have been seen as the small victory of not yielding seats on buses to later arriving white passengers. Blacks gathered in their churches to organize a boycott but set in motion something much larger. And they were not waiting for a leader; it was they who called a leader into being.

From their deep, passionately felt anger, King fashioned a majestic creed that was to change the South. He not only articulated the aims of the civil rights movement but guided it to what proved to be one of the greatest moral achievements of this morally troubled century. Now, twenty-four years after his death, how are we to figure out what gave Martin Luther King, Jr. the special gift he so brilliantly exploited?

Biographers have long stressed the importance of their subjects' formative years, and now this first volume of *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* presents scores of documents written by King in his first twenty-two years. Many accounts of the civil rights movement and King's central role in it have already been published, drawing on the observations of people who knew King. But wouldn't we know more—perhaps much more—if we could get to what King himself was writing before he took command in Montgomery?

Perhaps. Beautifully edited, annotated, and designed collections of documents are tantalizing affairs. Their readers are no longer dependent on scraps of memory or other people's interpretations; they have the genuine article before them. This collection invites that impression; Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, and Penny A. Russell—with the help of a great many other people—have scrupulously prepared King's early writings. But even this seemingly neutral presentation of documents still carries an authorial voice. Whether by self-selection—we see only the papers that have not been thrown away (or never got written)—or by decisions made by the editors, the documents, presented handsomely on the page, inevitably give a distinct shape to their author's life.

It is a shape—an image of the writer—that must, of course, be taken into account, but it is only one of many. It does well to recall how important the informal record of life is when we seek to imagine a man like King. The first document of the present collection is a case in point: a Father's Day telegram from eight-year-old "M L JR" and his sister and brother to their father, sent from and to the family's home address. Instantly, the reader is curious about a family that sends itself telegrams; a rich range of family dynamics is immediately evoked by a document whose composition Martin Luther King, Jr. may have had relatively little to do with. The document in and of itself is of little value. But its power to rouse our curiosity, our imagination, is immense.

In the first group of papers, there is also a schoolboy oration of 1940, "The Negro and the Constitution," which was King's first speech, his first call for freedom. In the piece, he alludes to the ending of slavery—that essential point of reference for all such discourses—and praises Marian Anderson for her concert from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial the year before. On the brink of world war, the young orator, deferential to the contest's judges, also stresses the virtues of education and patriotism stating, "... as we gird ourself to defend democracy." But he carefully notes that "one-tenth of the people of that democracy are ill nourished, sick, harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines—obey no Jim Crow laws." The editors' headnote suggests that King had considerable help with the polished oration, but help or not, an eleven-year old had publicly proclaimed that one day, his "head erect," he would "stand beside the Saxon—a Negro—and yet a man!"

A summer job in Connecticut at age fifteen was an occasion of political awakening. He reported to his mother that he had attended a nonsegregated church service; there was another way, one that did not exclude, that existed, that might be emulated. This summer awakening appears to have been a time of critical moral reflection as well. Asked on his application to the Crozer Theological Seminary four years later to "give your personal reasons for the decision to study for the Gospel Ministry," King replied, "My call to the ministry was quite different from most explanations I've heard. This decision came about in the summer of 1944 when I felt an inescapable urge to serve society."

The following fall, King was a freshman at Atlanta's Morehouse College, the gentlemanly school for the sons of African American families eager for social advancement. Since Morehouse was less than a mile across town, there were no letters home and no other reflections on his college years. But the editors' introductory note is suggestive. Benjamin E. Mays, himself one of the most influential Black leaders of the century, was the president of Morehouse during King's college years. My guess is that some of Mays's remarkable ability to inspire his listeners to work for justice may have gotten through to a student such as King, who was clearly predisposed to take such messages to heart.

The final two-thirds of the volume consist, in the main, of papers King wrote in courses he took to earn his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary, then located in Chester,

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Pennsylvania. Here the volume gives a shape to King's life that may be deceptive; the preponderance of these essays suggests that they warrant attention to the exclusion of all the other things that were going on in the mind and body of the young man who wrote them. It would be absurd not to take these essays seriously; yet it might well be a mistake to see them as defining documents.

One might expect the revelation of great personal soul searching in such work, but it is not there. Instead, we have proper responses to classroom assignments, designed to give the teacher what he or she wanted to hear. Never does King even come close to saying to his white instructors, damn it, how would you read all this theology if you inhabited the world I inhabit? The essays stand in sharp contrast to the way his listeners in the movement were later drawn into his intimate yearnings for freedom.

But the patient submission of dutifully completed assignments was more than deference to authority; it was training in dignity. The wonderful passion of a Southern Baptist preacher was unmistakable in all of King's later speeches, but that passion was always matched by an almost overpowering dignity. Unlike many Baptist preachers, he did not depend on shouts of biblical rhetoric, which were disconnected from one another and demanded antiphonal responses from aroused congregations. Without question, King could rouse emotion, but the grace of his elocution and the careful structure of his sermon-speeches had two immensely important functions beyond engendering fervor. First, he instilled a sense of discipline in his Black followers; they were not going to get away with a simple, one-time cathartic outpouring of anger. Instead, his measured, artfully enunciated sentences were a call to a deliberate, methodical series of steps on the long road to freedom.

The second crucial use King made of his restrained, correct enunciation of his revolutionary message was to win white America to his cause. A good many Northern whites whom King won would have been literally unable to understand a Baptist preacher whose training was in a rural pulpit rather than in the classrooms of an institution like Crozer.

But in the Crozer texts, there is little to suggest that King would be the author of that most famous of modern epistles, the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," rather than becoming one of the cautious clergymen to whom it was addressed. In 1955, the neatly dressed, eminently correct young clergyman, having recently come to Montgomery, was reluctant to desert the proprieties of a dignified pulpit; he was brought around to the boycott only after others had acted. The Black people of Montgomery, crowded into their many churches, allowed their passion to overflow; their amens became the invocation. They prepared Martin Luther King, Jr. for greatness.

But the Crozer papers suggest there was no great intellectual rigor in the course of graduate study at the seminary. Nor, to a nontheological eye, do they hint at the development of a spiritual underpinning for a revolutionary movement that clearly drew on a deep well of religious commitment. As James H. Cone has pointed out, one must look back to King's father and grandfather—and to his mother—for the infusion of that faith. Throughout the days of slavery, African Americans had made the Christian church not only a temple of sustenance under oppression, but an agency of their deliverance.

And King seems to have had no compunction about taking, verbatim, the words of others and putting them in his own work bereft of quotation marks or attribution. In a perceptive review in the *New York Times Book Review,* Keith D. Miller commented: "Treating language as a communal treasure, not private property, folk preachers gained authority by identifying themselves with well-known, sanctified messages. Only in the world of print ... do words become commodities that are copyrighted, owned, packaged and sold."

But, as Miller acknowledged, plagiarism is not acceptable in formal scholarly papers. In many of his essays, King mentioned the authors (and even the titles) from whom he extensively copied. So why did his teachers fail to spot at least the more obvious liftings of text and set their student straight? Were King's professors too careless to notice, or were they, as teachers often are, reluctant to punish an instance of plagiarism? Or worse, were they, as good liberal white men, reluctant to do so because the culprit was Black? If so, they did their student a disservice; King's reputation is already blemished by the disclosure of plagiarism in his doctoral dissertation.

Carson and his fellow editors have silently and intelligently handled the matter by placing a footnote number after a section of King's text, and then, with a note at the foot of the page, repeated the passage that was copied, giving a formal citation to the author.

During his seminary days, King did get his first practice in forcing the courts to honor African Americans' rights. In 1950, he was one of four plaintiffs in one of the many precursors to the successful effort to win free entry into places of public accommodation. King and three friends were denied service in a New Jersey tavern just after midnight on a Monday morning, and the four sued under the state's equal access law. As in most other such attempts before the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the case was dropped—in this instance, because white witnesses refused to testify. We can only suppose that King took the event not to be a lesson in despair, but rather an example of perseverance. But he made no comment that illuminates the formal court deposition.

Such struggles with social realities were at arm's length with some of his classroom encounters with theology, but they were never far from his mind. In this book's most personal and revealing document, the brief "Autobiography of Religious Development," written for a course at Crozer on religion and personality, King looks back to his childhood. When he was six, a white boy with whom he had been playing every day told him that his father forbade any further friendship. The little King boy did not understand and asked his father and mother to explain. When they, like thousands of other African American parents, taught him the required lesson, he was "from that moment ... determined to hate every white person. As I grew older and older this feeling continued to grow. My parents would tell me that I should not hate the white [man], but that it was my duty as a Christian to love him."

This familial teaching was the key to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s greatness. He would soon declare he would endure humiliations of racism no more and take up the leadership of a revolution that profoundly changed his South and his nation. The strength to do so came less from courses in theology than from the faith of his own people who had so long endured and who knew the time was coming to say enough is enough. The love his parents had taught him was not the stuff of submission but the locus of power. It readied him for the call that came from his neighbors in Montgomery—the call to give voice to a new birth of freedom. □

BOOK REVIEW

Does Clinton Have an Answer?

We present two perspectives on Reinventing Government, *a book that is said to have influenced Bill Clinton. Underlying the disagreements about this book are deeper questions about whether Clinton's liberalism could plausibly solve the problems facing America.*

Meaning Politics

David Schulman

Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler. Addison-Wesley, 1992, 405 pp.

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, Bill Clinton promised a government that was leaner but not meaner. David Osborne has emerged as a key adviser to Bill Clinton on governmental restructuring, so if you want to have a feel for how that promise would translate into policy, you need look no further than Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government*. You may be put off by this treatise's seeming embrace of a market vocabulary to describe a new vision of government. It's certain that many will try to paint *Reinventing Government* as the worst sort of political sell-out—a more sophisticated form of Reagan's assault upon the public sector. But if you look more closely, you'll see that Osborne is passionately committed to a politics of meaning, but frames his position in a language that seems to fit the corporate mentality of the nineties.

Osborne dares to steal the language of entrepreneurship away from those who would devote it solely to the purpose of making profit and argues that it can be used to renew political meaning. Osborne and co-author Ted Gaebler asked government department heads and managers throughout the country at all levels of government to describe what they thought needed to be done to alleviate the pervasive sense of gridlock which permeates government. Their answers were surprisingly consistent, but couched in a managerial language common to organizational enterprise. Osborne and Gaebler retain this language in their report, rather than translating it into a more familiar terminology about assumptions and beliefs, meaning, purpose, and values. By doing so, they risk being misidentified as privatizers scheming to sell democracy off to the highest bidder. But the managerial terminology they use constitutes a language of change recognizable to those already engaged in the business of government.

Osborne and Gaebler's first anecdote recounts a local park supervisor's success in acquiring, for the city's parks, a surplus swimming pool which had suddenly become available for bid. Because city government had given local managers greater discretion and authority to make timely purchases without cumbersome oversight and review, he knew the money could ultimately become available, so he entered a bid immediately and secured the pool. This story is about entrepreneurial behavior and budgetary allocations, accounting principles and goal orientation, strategic planning and re-defining lines of authority. It is also about people in a neighborhood getting a new swimming pool.

Osborne and Gaebler listened to the ideas and meaning implicit in the bureaucratic language used by the people they interviewed, and they found some common themes. Organizational missions should be clarified because elected officials often burden government agencies with multiple and often conflicting goals. Departments separated into smaller units with clearer goals can increase accountability and heighten staff satisfaction. Because the archaic practice of requiring departments to spend all the money in their budgets by year's end to justify same or increased-level funding requests the next year demoralized staff and distorted planning, departments that saved—like the parks and recs staff who bought the swimming pool at cut-rate price at auction—should be rewarded for their initiative by rolling the savings over into the next year's budget.

Osborne and Gaebler argue that we are undergoing a paradigm shift in the way government must function. They claim that a particular conversation about governmental functioning has ended. The solutions fashioned to solve the problems presented by industrial-era monopolies are now themselves problems. The massive, hierarchical government bureaucracies which were once useful in confronting industrial-era social problems are now stifling the initiative and creativity needed to create structures that allow government workers to flourish in a post-industrial age. This depersonalizing, unresponsive governmental organization is an adversary to the people it serves and oppresses the people who serve within it.

Osborne and Gaebler believe that the key to meaningful politics is not getting government out of the way. It is transforming government's outmoded organization to fit today's problems. Their chronicles of stories government workers tell about their frustrations and the solutions they generated to overcome them offer reasons to

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believe that government workers and citizens can work to create real change. Their description of government's archaic rules and inflexible structures explains how the very spirit of commitment and dedication that drew so many people to government service in the first place is slowly squeezed out of them. By describing how government staff and citizens have consciously remade governmental bureaucratic structures to reflect today's needs, Osborne and Gaebler offer a vision of hope and renewal, a concrete praxis for a politics of meaning.

The entrepreneurial language that Osborne and Gaebler use risks being misunderstood as an argument for unrestricted privatization because of its association with the marketplace. But the entrepreneurial spirit once helped free individuals from static societies. It was part of a spirit of change that led to the original American revolution in government. We have lost the vitality such language allows us to bring to our discourse about the role of government in our lives. Their argument that entrepreneurial government is a third way—neither the imperial do-nothing of Reagan-Bush nor the monolithic do-everything of Big Government—requires that we recall the original spirit entrepreneurism represented.

Clinton's call for a New Covenant requires that we also consider fundamental meanings. In an era when marketing advisers and image makers are the hottest commodities in electoral politics, we must engage in a hermeneutics of suspicion toward anyone claiming to offer something new. Too often in a consumer culture, the offer of something new serves as a substitute for renewal and hope. We should be wary that the entrepreneurial language of *Reinventing Government* can be misused to create a government that is lean because it's mean, that abandons instead of retrains civil servants, that embraces competition to divide and destroy instead of to create new forms of cooperation.

How do we know that Clinton's call for a New Covenant is a call for a shared enterprise and not an entrepreneurial nightmare? The call rings true because neither Clinton nor Osborne and Gaebler claim that reinvigorated government can be divorced from questions about public values. Osborne and Gaebler explicitly claim their strategy is to enable elected officials to return to the original constitutional vision of their role as leaders promoting the public good, accountable for their actions because results are apparent. No longer should government decisions be indecipherable because they are not examined with the same precision and care profitmakers apply to the search for more profit. Government officials don't govern when they avoid making choices.

Clinton first caught my attention when he said it was time America grew up and began to make choices. We abandon choice and responsibility when we submit to market forces and the invisible hand. Invisible hands are magician's hands, diverting our attention while we are manipulated.

The language of New Covenant claims our attention because it calls for communal commitments to common enterprises, not to private enterprise. Its biblical echoes are profound because a covenant is not a contract, a marketplace agreement. It is a dedication to foundational values, to definitions of peoplehood. It is a language which is powerful not only for Bible-Belt Christians, but for Jews as well. A covenant is what binds people together into community. Our premillenial exhaustion, the feeling that we have worn out the forms and structures of common life, amplifies the potency of a call to renew an American covenant, to reinvent our self-governance.

I write from Los Angeles, where government's frame has been badly shaken. I work within government to combat one of our time's great griefs. From these two perspectives, Clinton's and *Reinventing Government*'s call seem more than mere rhetoric. But as in all true praxis, we'll only learn more by engaging. □

Wallace Katz Responds: Letting Go of Liberalism

Unlike David Schulman, I'm not bothered by Osborne's use of entrepreneurial rhetoric in *Reinventing Government*. Indeed, I'm inclined to agree that entrepreneurial means can help in part to make government better for its "consumers" and civil servants. My argument with Osborne is more basic; I think his book fails to do justice to its subject. *Reinventing Government* is a shallow book that pretends to discover a "new political paradigm," but in fact merely repackages well known and tangentially effective local and state government strategies. Osborne fails to see that the big, weak, and incompetent bureaucracies he so dislikes are rooted in the liberalism that he upholds. A real new paradigm would require us both to reject and transcend liberalism, by which I mean both the nineteenth century brand of economic liberalism and the twentieth century New Deal variant, via a new vision of American society.

If we take *Reinventing Government* at face value, we buy into its hype, as Schulman does. To understand its defects we need the following context:

In a liberal capitalist society, government serves to balance the growth needs of money and market with the social needs of places and people. This used to be easy: "What was good for General Motors was good for America." But now the global marketplace and instantaneous electronic technologies have freed capital from state control, and, at the same time, have thrust it into a volatile and competitive environment where labor, financing, and location are up for grabs. To compete, many industries export production abroad, where land and labor are cheap. Land use focuses on high profits and fast returns—luxury office buildings and apartments in gentrified urban centers and edge cities, rather than affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization in the old urban cores. When possible, wage earners with big pensions and high hourly

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wages are let go. The result is a global remapping process of uneven development, regional disparity, and social differentiation: developed and newly developing countries against the Third World; suburbanites against the inner-city poor; a wider divide between well-qualified professionals and semi-skilled or unskilled laborers and service employees. Government's quandary is synonymous with the demise of post-war Keynesianism: there are no longer any easy equations between growth and redistribution; and growth often occurs at the expense of people and places.

Government's task is all the more difficult because of an ideological void. Social democracy is in trouble because in advanced industrial societies the working class is hard to define and because globalization has weakened post-war social compacts between capital, labor, and government. Liberalism, too, is dying, because its constraints impede and distort two agendas necessary to the ongoing process of modernization—the redistributive social agenda of the 1960s and the economic "competitiveness" agenda of the 1980s and 1990s.

David Schulman says that strategies for change must be integrated with public values. But what both he and Osborne don't see is that liberalism has a hard time doing this. Liberalism's problems are those of a market-centered system that views public and social investment not as unnecessary but as extraneous. Hence its prohibition, except in war time, against planning, wage and price controls, and industrial policy; and its view of issues such as the environment, education, public investment, unemployment, health care, poverty, etc., as "externalities," "social costs of production," or "market imperfections." Because liberalism fears both democracy and power, it eschews a definition of the common good, transmuting the universal demand for justice into simply another interest to be partially satisfied within its competitive system of claimant pluralism. Liberalism also impoverishes political discourse by suppressing or excluding matters such as class, social breakdown, regional disparity, and questions about authority and democracy, because they are too "global," meaning they defy utilitarian analysis (cost-benefit calculus, trade-offs between equity and efficiency), and because they reveal structures of power that belie pluralist consensus.

The paradox is that the constraints of liberalism and the growth of unwieldy bureaucracies go hand in hand. Fearful of both power and democracy, lacking the common good as an organizing principle, and with so many "externalities" and "market imperfections" to adjust for and claimants to satisfy, liberalism itself creates government that is big, ineffective, and incapable of reform; its anomalies spawn ever larger and more complex bureaucracies, and government becomes the venue for a myriad of often irreconcilable interests. Sooner or later, of course, the whole system falls under the weight of the expectations it raises but cannot satisfy. Citizens balk at increased taxation to perpetuate a system they cannot comprehend or trust. Tax revolts confine government to an even more limited framework, oscillating between two equally unacceptable alternatives: abnegation of responsibility via the doctrines of laissez-faire and "creative destruction"; or mere "tinkering" with the mechanics of the system at its edge, yielding sparse results. Whence the recurring crisis of voter apathy, rage, and "ungovernability," and the search for a "new paradigm."

At this point, largely ignorant of the history and deeper causes of the crisis of "ungovernability," enter David Osborne, an enterprising journalist on the trail of something "hot." Now a consultant and "think tank" fellow, Osborne started out as a journalist with the *Boston Globe.* His book fits the journalistic mold: It's high on observation of current trends, low on historical perspective or critical judgment, and it views its subject entirely through the constraining prism of extant liberalism. Yet it does offer an apparent solution to the riddle that plagues politicians: how to sustain the hope that government can work, despite the limits that presently stalemate it; and how to convince the electorate, which doesn't want more taxes but does want more services, that it can get "more for less." Osborne resolves this conundrum by reporting on a number of local and state government strategies that evade or revise bureaucratic practice; and he cleverly repackages these well known techniques with a "new paradigm" ribbon, claiming that he has "reinvented" government for "our flexible, rapidly changing knowledge-based economy."

So far so good, except this is as far as Osborne goes. But without confronting the constraints of liberalism, his vaunted techniques can only tinker around the edges of the system: they may get people in Visalia, California a swimming pool, but they can't resolve the problems of global economic competition, inner-city poverty and social breakdown, political stalemate, or even incompetent and bloated bureaucracies. If, as he admits, the success of the new paradigm depends on a healthy civic infrastructure and shared goals, then it requires preconditions that a liberal system of claimant pluralism generally precludes. These same techniques can only make a small dent in the elephantine hide of bureaucracy, because the bloated character of public bureaucracies is a direct result of everything that the market shunts aside and that the government under liberalism must "compensate for" in token and therefore ineffective ways. This includes the fact that government itself is often the employer of last resort for minorities and workers left unemployed by racism, inadequate education, or "deindustrialization."

But there's another question even more important than Osborne's failure to confront the limits of liberalism. The sea change of post industrial transformation affords us the opportunity to redefine our goals for the twenty-first century, an opportunity that we may miss if we follow his method of backing into the future by focusing on technocratic strategies, by equating the resolution of means with the definition and achievement of ends.

Oddly enough, were Osborne a deeper thinker and a better reporter, or, more likely, had he been less eager to serve the immediate needs of his neo-liberal masters at the Democratic Leadership Council, he might have seen the makings of a real new paradigm—an alternative market society. What David Schulman senses and associates with a politics of meaning is only hinted at in *Reinventing Government,* and Osborne doesn't understand and can't conceptualize what he occasionally observes. Yet the alternative market society is emerging slowly in all sorts of strange places—northern Georgia, where a Budweiser branch plant was turned away because of its possible long-term adverse effects on Lake Lanier; Pittsburgh, where newly arrived corporation executives are judged on their ability to fit into the city's civic culture; or Baltimore, where

fifty-two Black churches have a "covenant" with the city's business elites to reconstruct community, education, and housing in the inner city.

The guiding principle of the alternative market society is the notion that people live in places, and that the experience of place, which is at once physical, cultural, and social, needs to be preserved and cultivated, even in the face of or, more precisely, especially because of the threat posed by the post-industrial global economy. This principle differs from the idea that all people need is education enabling them to move where the jobs are, an idea synonymous with Clinton's slogan of "putting people first." It also presupposes a different notion of the new information economy, which some describe as a global village in which the actual experience of place will give way to an individual, sitting at his or her computer, able to reach anywhere or anyone in the world.

The alternative market society puts a premium on place, because actual places are where people achieve continuity, make long-term investments in family, friends, school, neighborhoods, jobs, and institutions, and where, if they are lucky, they have a real opportunity to work with others to build a good society. The alternative market society is capitalist, in that it uses markets, private investment, and the tools of economic development; and, of course, it relies on all the entrepreneurial techniques described in *Reinventing Government*. Nonetheless, the alternative market society represents a complete reconceptualization of the old liberal paradigm. For example:

The alternative market society substitutes indigenous economic development for mere "growth." Instead of chasing branch plants of global corporations via tax incentives, communities—alliances of government, business, labor, universities, and non-profit groups—concentrate on developing, supporting, and finding global markets for native industries, preferably small and midsize businesses that will remain in the community, that will promote its public and social investments, that will respect the environment, that will hire local workers and contribute to the diversification of its economic base. Indigenous economic development is thus synonymous with public value, and with market outcomes that are governed by public purposes.

The alternative market society concerns itself with social reconstruction rather than redistribution; its aim is not income maintenance but real change. It doesn't ignore the problems of poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, bad housing, and inadequate education, but it understands that these problems are related to a cultural and social breakdown in the larger society that has depleted traditional values and weakened the old mediating institutions—family, school, church, neighborhood, labor union, fraternal organization. Alternative market societies bring the entire community to bear in order to reconstruct or somehow recreate these institutions; and also to work daily on problems such as homelessness, education, drugs, crime, etc. And instead of emphasizing "family values" while simultaneously encouraging uneven investment by global capital, the alternative market society creates new capital allocation mechanisms that bring capital providers into permanent relation with community groups to foster neighborhood revitalization.

The alternative market society is less interested in reforming bureaucracy or public administration than in overcoming uneven development and regional disparity. Almost all central cities in the United States are much poorer in every kind of resource—per-capita income, tax base, health care, jobs—than the suburbs and exurbs that surround them. These same cities lurch from crisis to crisis, burdened with responsibilities and expenses that contribute to bloated bureaucracies and that work against anticipatory planning and innovation. For all practical purposes we might as well admit that the urban civilization that we created in the period 1870–1945 is now lost. But the present situation—in which edge cities and suburbs are pitted against core cities, and in which core cities, notwithstanding downtown "gentrification," are left to decay—is equally untenable. Alternative market societies affirm a new vision of metropolitan civilization, in which long-term planning for balanced development structures an entire regional economy. Transportation, schooling, housing, environmental planning, and economic development become transregional and complementary rather than competitive activities.

The alternative market society eschews the usual American polarities of elitism and claimant pluralism in favor of civic culture. The political problem posed by the global economy is one of investors and business elites who have no interest other than economic in the places where their capital is invested, and who consequently acknowledge no responsibility for communities, neighborhoods, equity, social and public investment, or citizenship. The purpose of a civic culture is to interest business elites in common work and public purposes, and to connect them through these public purposes with other groups in society for social action and investment; when governance from the top down meets organization from the bottom up, the operative word is democracy. The cement of civic culture is social inclusion, the idea being not that everybody gets a piece of the pie, but that everyone is part of the common work and "stands for the whole" (no utopian slogan, but the actual motto of the Industrial Areas Foundation at work in places like Baltimore and San Antonio).

As the above discussion indicates, there is no necessary contradiction between Osborne's "entrepreneurial revolution" and the alternative market society that is developing in select locales around the country. Indeed, they are complementary. The real question pertains not to David Osborne's book, but to Bill Clinton's heart and mind. David Schulman is wrong to think that Osborne's prescriptions could go either way and might lead to a government that is lean and mean, shorn of public value, in the hands, say, of Jim Pinkerton or Jack Kemp. To the extent that Clinton and Osborne have appropriated the language and ideas of people like Kemp, Pinkerton, and Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation, they have prepared the way for a regime of well-intentioned liberal tinkering. In this scenario, Clinton would be the president that Bush has not been, somebody willing both to take government and Jack Kemp's ideas seriously, and to use the power of the presidency to try to make a difference. But as is generally known, Kemp's ideas—enterprise zones, home ownership for public housing tenants—don't work and are in any case inadequate to the sea change crisis that confronts us; and the entrepreneurial techniques of *Reinventing Government,* in and of themselves, cannot achieve significant change.

Yet Clinton is a complex, divided, and curious politician. There is some-

thing more than rhetorical in his invocation of a "New Covenant," something deep and southern in his talk of bringing us together, something both less and more than calculating about his ambition, energy, and high spirits. Which is why when I go to the voting booth, with fear and trembling, to cast my vote for him, I will try and think not of the Rhodes scholar and "policy wonk" whose mind will likely reject the idea of an alternative market society, but rather of Bill Clinton, the boy from Hope, Arkansas, whose heart and hopes for America in the twenty-first century may lead him towards it. Unfortunately, postmodern cynic that I am, I will also know, even as I pull the lever, that this is what "they" want me to believe. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 6)

to themselves in order to appear to conform to the needs of the other.

But to some extent you simply cannot have a relationship unless you have compromise and sensitivity not only to your own needs but to those of the other. Similarly, you can't have community without making the decision that sometimes you are going to go along with the will of the majority even when it's not your will. Otherwise, you have communities collapsing because people are only in them for the moments when things are going their way, but disappearing the second things are not going their way. That creates instability. People learn that they can't count on each other, so they withdraw into themselves and give up on community. Similarly, a family or relationship that has no commitment beyond the moments when it feels good is a family or relationship that is always going to be teetering on the edge of collapse. If this is the kind of alternative family or alternative community we build, no wonder people are going to feel more insecure and increasingly yearn for the stability that right-wing authoritarians offer as an alternative. You'll even find some people in the gay community responding to Perot precisely because he seems to offer the stability that people find lacking in the kinds of relationships (including alternative and lesbian relationships) that our liberal, individual rights centered worldview has produced.

Our inability in the feminist movement, in the lesbian community, and in the Left—not just the male-dominated Left—to come up with a model of commitment that transcends this highly individualistic model is what Fox-Genovese and other "corporatist" (Yuck, what a terrible choice of words on her part) feminists want to critique. The "politics of meaning" approach in the July issue of *Tikkun* seems to me to be an important new direction here, and it dovetails well with Fox-Genovese's critique of the old liberal individualism that dominates too much of feminist thinking. My point here is *not* to criticize feminism, but to criticize the individualistic trend within feminism, and to suggest that those of us who agree with the politics of meaning perspective need to have a different kind of feminism and to engage in an ideological struggle with the individualist versions of feminism.

Fox-Genovese's point, I believe, is that this individualist feminism is killing us. Precisely because it can be used to discredit us, and precisely because it is the kind of feminism that will make many women feel that they can't identify with it because it undermines families and loving relationships, for those reasons it will be the kind of feminism that the media represents as the only or main kind of feminism. Our only chance to revive a vibrant feminist movement is to disassociate ourselves from it, and to do that in a direct and powerful way.

Doing that runs against all the injunctions about respect for difference, etc., that are the common slogans of feminism today. I respect difference when it comes to different ethnic traditions. But no ethnic community ever survived on a politics of individualism—because communities always require a notion of commitment and mutual responsibility. What I don't respect is a politics of bourgeois individualism protecting itself by claiming to be a politics of difference—just another lifestyle that we have to respect because we are being sisterly and attentive to our differences.

Instead, I feel that the kind of feminism I want to support is one that believes in responsibility to others, commitment to others, and does not glorify the right of every individual to do her own thing without regard to the consequences for others. I know how the language of responsibility has been manipulated in the past to force us to submit to the will of men. But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about egalitarian relationships and nonauthoritarian families. But once we are in that kind of a framework, we have to give up our attachment to the language of individual rights as our highest value and adopt the language of caring and concern. That's why I like *Tikkun*'s idea of a progressive, pro-family coalition, and that's why I like *Tikkun*'s notion of a politics of meaning to replace a politics of economic entitlements and political rights. I don't think Nancy Hewitt has even begun to grapple with what is at stake in Fox-Genovese's book or article, or with *Tikkun*'s politics of meaning, so I think her critique really evades rather than responds to the new perspective *Tikkun* and Fox-Genovese are trying to raise.

Sally Schwartz, Ph.D.
New York, New York

Nancy Hewitt responds:

Since in my twenty years as a feminist, I have never been an advocate of the version of mainstream feminism that is rooted in bourgeois individualism, I have no quarrel with Ms. Schwartz's desire "to disassociate ourselves from it." My point is rather that in doing so, we should not blame Feminism writ large for the problems of one particular variant of this diverse movement. We should, moreover, recognize that some advances in women's rights could probably only have been made through the promotion of a liberal feminist platform. We should recognize as well that large numbers of women in the past, some of whom referred to themselves as feminists and some who did not, have already struggled with these issues, and we can learn more from attending to their analysis than from attacking those of "individualist feminists." We can also learn much from socialist-feminist writers of the 1960s and 1970s and from contemporary feminist academics like Patricia Hill Collins, Elsa Barkley Brown, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, and Chandra Talpede Mohanty. They remind us that working-class women and women of color, in the United States and around the world, have long advocated theo-

ries that emphasize "both/and" rather than "either/or" logic. Such a perspective encourages us to think about how to combine individual rights and communal commitments rather than to assume that we must choose between them. This is, I believe, the best way to grapple with rather than evade the issues raised by Fox-Genovese and the many women and men committed to rethinking Left politics in general and feminism in particular.

PERSONAL ESSAY

(Continued from p. 28)

turn off all the lights on his way out of the room. And I would sit in the dark through the long New England twilight feeling like I was living an old Jewish joke.

It was even worse when I went home to Queens.

Friday nights at Shabbat dinner my brother and I would always get into the same argument. I would say, "So tell me one more time, why do you follow Jewish law?"

"Well, the traditional answer is that it's the word of God. We don't really have any choice in the matter."

"Mmmm, but you don't really believe that. Not literally. Why do you follow it?"

"Well, I like what Rosenzweig said. The Torah is the record of a divine encounter between God and humanity. But being fallible humans, we may have made some mistakes in the transmission."

"So which part did we get wrong?"

"I like what Buber said. The Torah was given to each of us personally. And each of us must respond to that which speaks to our own heart."

"But suppose nothing is speaking to my heart?"

"Look. It's our heritage and it's a good way of life and that's enough for me."

And the problem was that this discussion would inevitably turn into an intellectual debate. And I could always talk just a little bit faster than my brother. At some point he would say, "You're not listening to me."

"No, you're not listening to me."

"You're not listening to me!"

And then I would tell him this story, and already, my brother knew what was coming:

"Once, there was the Belcher Rebbe. Every Friday night thousands of Chasidim would come from all over the world to the Rebbe's *tisch,* to taste a piece of the Rebbe's *challah.*

"One Friday night, the place was packed. Wall to wall Chasidim. The Rebbe was late. When he finally arrived, the crowd parted down the middle and created an aisle for the great Rebbe. The Rebbe slowly made his way to the front of the room, Rebbe picked up the cup of wine and started to say *Kiddush.* In a tiny voice he sang, *'Boruch ...'* and thousands of Chasidim started singing and swinging and swaying, and this went on for two hours. And finally they calmed down and the Rebbe said, *'Atawh...'* and they sang and they swang until three o'clock in the morning when the Rebbe finally finished the *Kiddush* and made *Motzi* on the *challah.* And thousands of Chasidim descended upon the Rebbe's *challah* and accidentally tore the Rebbe to pieces.

"And the Rebbe's grandson, in trying to understand this terrible tragedy explained, 'If you want to be a rebbe, don't look like a *challah.*'"

And my brother said to me, "It's impossible to talk to you."

At the end of my junior year of college, I decided for the first time not to go to a Jewish summer camp. I felt incredibly guilty. I was letting down my brother. I was letting down Young Judaea. I was letting down the Jewish people. But that summer I wanted to stay in New York and work on a film instead. I wrote my brother a fifteen-page agonized letter in tiny script, detailing every argument that had gone through my head and mailed it off to him in Israel. I knew he would answer me right away, that he would take up each and every one of my points and tell me exactly what I should do. I waited for his reply. I waited all summer.

Then it came. An aerogram. One page. Blue paper. But there were just the logistics of his return flight. My brother was bringing back his fiancée, a nonreligious Israeli woman who was becoming observant for him. And then at the bottom of the page, scribbled in the corner, it said, "Oh. And about your letter. I think your problem is that you think too much."

Now that was true. But I still wanted to kill him.

When my brother got home, every time I saw him I got angry about the letter. But I checked myself. The family was celebrating the upcoming wedding and it was no time for a fight.

But one Shabbat afternoon, we were lying on our beds in the bedroom we still shared, when suddenly the lights went out.

"What happened?"

"Oh," my brother said, "I changed the timers on the lights. I like to take a nap on Shabbat afternoon."

"But I like to read in the afternoon, and there are no other lights on in the house."

"Well, why don't you just forget it and go to sleep."

"You're going to be a rabbi? You're a selfish schmuck."

"Stop whining. I'm not your mother."

And for the first time since I was ten years old, I hit my brother. I punched him in the chest.

And we were standing in the hallway of our house

screaming at each other at the top of our lungs, and I was pounding on his chest.

My mother stuck her head out down the end of the hall and she yelled, "They're fighting! Why are they fighting?"

And my brother said, "Shhh! WE'RE NOT FIGHTING!"

And then my brother's fiancée stuck her head out down the hall, and at that moment I could see how things were going to be for them. They were going to have this Jewish Israeli household. It was perfect. My brother was going to be a rabbi. He knew everything he wanted, and suddenly I saw that I didn't want it, that I didn't know a thing.

And I wanted to stop fighting but we were screaming. I was screaming and his voice was roaring up louder, and I kept pounding on him, faster now, and I couldn't see anything at all, and I said, "YOU'RE NOT MY CONSCIENCE! YOU'RE NOT MY REBBE!"

And my strength was gone. My arms kept slapping him but with nothing. "Tell me what to do."

And my brother grabbed my wrists in his big hands and he shook me. And we stopped fighting. I was crying and he was still.

He looked into my eyes like he was trying to find something, trying to find me, and he said, "What's wrong?...What's wrong?" □

Multiple Sclerosis

(Continued from p. 43)

being indoctrinated into its artificiality. In a metaphor for her plight, she pours out her story to a Russian sailor, who of course doesn't understand a word she's saying; in desperation, she finally cries out to him, "I am everything that has happened to me!"

Today the specter of a horrible epidemic stalks the world. Everyone knows that AIDS is caused by a virus, and many millions of dollars and hours have been dedicated to unlocking the secret of the molecular structure and functions of the human immunodeficiency viruses. But the story of the AIDS epidemic is also the story of the destruction of cultures, of ways of life.

Nathan Clumek, discoverer of the disease and one of the most authoritative researchers studying the epidemic, writing in the European journal *Infection,* attributed the transcontinental spread of AIDS in Africa to "uncontrolled growth of urban centers, extension of female prostitution, disruption of family units, urban immigration of male workforce, movement of various armies and breakdown of health services...." All of which adds up to the destruction of a traditional, rural, tribal way of life—that is, one based on the relationships of family. It is a story of material and spiritual loss: In Zaire, the former Belgian Congo, at the core of the epidemic, the standard of living today is but a fraction of what it was at the time of liberation from colonial rule in 1960. A brutal military dictatorship, spawned by the conflicts of great-power geopolitics, enriches itself at the expense of the lifeblood of its people.

The recent history of sub-Saharan Africa is a story of almost unmitigated grief, as described in a vast scholarly literature, from Peter Ritner's *The Death of Africa* in 1960 to Lloyd Timberlake's *Africa In Crisis* in 1986, a study, in Timberlake's words, of "environmental bankruptcy." Not a medical diagnosis exactly; but in a medical text entitled *Viruses and the Environment,* J. I. Cooper and F. O. MacCallum of the Institute of Virology at Oxford write, "From time to time, drastic environmental changes occur, and whether these are attributable to natural phenomena or result from human interference ... one consequence is liable to be a catastrophic increase in disease incidence (epidemics)."

The illnesses that beset humankind are inseparable from its history, from everything that has happened to us.

I suppose it was the discovery and elucidation of the molecular structure and biology of genes by the middle of the 1960s, an academic accomplishment that we crusaders of the new commonwealth ignored for the battle raging in the streets, that sealed the fate of psychosomatic hypotheses about the nature of multiple sclerosis and the other diseases of our time and place (the diseases of material plenty, as distinguished from the diseases of physical want). Here in the genome there was finally a mechanism we could observe and measure that had created humanity, a handle on the sequential processes of life, a key to understanding reality that didn't require the pursuit of the elusive essence of so insubstantial a thing as the mind. The double helix provided a theoretical framework for a biology that did not demand, as an integral part of its mastery, an understanding of moral issues, of human hopes and dreams, and—more to the point—the consequences of the failure of their fulfillment. This lion that roams the streets of the modern world has been reduced and encapsulated in the contemporary medical paradigm to a concept denoted by the word "stress," and a prescription has been written for it: Avoid it, or barring that, cope with it as best you can.

Barry Commoner is reputed to have said, "DNA is not the secret of life; life is the secret of DNA." By this he meant that the permutations of deoxyribonucleic acid molecules are really only a way of encoding

and passing on to the next generation the accumulated experience of the species. In so doing, DNA preserves the portion of that experience that worked, that kept the organism alive, so succeeding generations need not go through it and have to take the same risks all over again—thus freeing them to deal with the next encounter with adversity and, with luck, to pursue their own freedom. When the circumstances of existence are too suddenly wrenched out of this inheritance, and the individual is left to fend for him- or herself, without sufficient basis for believing in a sustaining future, and without the means to create that future, life withers and disease follows. The microorganism that comes along at that moment is but the handmaiden of that process.

Seen in this context, genetic and other molecular factors are necessary but not sufficient considerations in the effort to understand human conditions, to understand the fit between ourselves and the world we live in. They cannot be isolated from ecological factors, which include, for our own species at least, the economic, social, and political: the moral issues of our history and of our time. In the disjunction between the organisms we are and the environment we depend on for our sustenance lies the unguarded space that a pathogenic microorganism or some other unwanted cell or molecule fills.

I can still hear my mother rehearsing the opening lines of her first book review to the Women's Club of that little town in Nebraska, after she decided to try to make a go of it and get into the life of the community. She had chosen to review *The Snake Pit,* an account of one woman's struggle with mental derangement, and her speech began, "The mind is the key to Man's reality. But when the key sticks in the lock ...." I don't remember the rest. I suppose I've been laboring away at my own book review—that is, review of the literature on the subject—ever since I was handed, not long after my mother's death, my first assignment in my first course in college, Freud's *Five Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* which were the introduction of Freud's ideas to the New World. Freud delivered the lectures at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1909, at the same time my grandmother was carrying my mother in her womb in that same town. Jews of the Diaspora all, inheritors of a tradition of disappointment, but not of surrender. Seeking the key to unlock the secret, to ensure somehow that the fate of humankind not be perpetual disappointment. And not finding it.

I like to believe that the move to Nebraska that was so disastrous for my mother made an American out of me, and that I am therefore also heir to a more optimistic tradition. So I continue to hunt for that key, trusting that a more hopeful prospect may be locked within the psyche, that is, the soul, of our kind, and that I may make my own statement on the subject someday. But so far it's scarcely more than a collection of notes. □

Eros and the Jews

(Continued from p. 52)

to the problem of desire and that the ambivalences that American Jews experience today are very much the heritage of the past. Indeed, the challenge today is to move beyond the binary oppositions of erotic health versus pathology, liberation and repression, and to allow the exploration of a multiplicity of desires: what has been marginalized now needs to be incorporated. In particular, the polarities of male and female sexuality should no longer confine our imagination. Erotic desire operates in a constant tension between attraction to what is familiar and to what is different, even forbidden. True erotic fulfillment, I would argue, is only possible on the personal level when we recognize and accept elements of the other gender in ourselves, whether in a heterosexual or homosexual framework, even as we affirm who we are. To balance the male definitions of Jewish sexuality, which have been so dominant throughout the tradition, with female definitions constitutes the historical and collective dimension of this process, a process which is essential not only for women, but for men as well. Since Alexander Portnoy's famous "complaint" involved to such a great degree the objectification and silencing of women, perhaps the best therapy for his neurosis is the reclaiming of female erotic voices. The issue of intermarriage, so much debated in American Jewish culture today, is based on a related polarity. If the dialectic between Self and Other is a necessary characteristic of the erotic on the gender level, the same is true of relations between Jews and non-Jews. The future of the Jews as a people clearly depends on the ability of Jewish culture to imagine other Jews as erotic, yet the attraction of the gentile will always be part of this struggle, a struggle that cannot be resolved by the mere rejection of the Other. The challenge in a post-traditional world is to divest the binary opposition between Jew and gentile of its theological baggage and, thereby, to temper its elements of fantasy and projection. Only when erotic relations between Jews and non-Jews appear less momentous and threatening will they lose part of their fascination.

Erotic relations between Jews and non-Jews both reflect and symbolize the interaction between Jewish culture and the cultures of those among whom the Jews have lived. Jewish culture, I have argued,

never evolved in a vacuum, but was always the product of the fruitful interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures; Jews have always lived and participated in a multicultural world. In this respect, the search for an authentic definition of Jewish sexuality in contemporary culture recapitulates historical struggles, whether between the biblical Israelites and the Canaanites, the talmudic rabbis and the Hellenists, or between the medieval Jews and their Christian and Moslem neighbors. In all these cases, the result was a distinctive understanding of sexuality in which the textual tradition was both preserved and transformed as the Jews participated in the wider cultures of their times.

It is my hope that the study of Jewish sexuality may play a similar role, by bringing to bear a new set of cultural questions on the Jewish textual tradition and perhaps changing the way we see the tradition in the process. Since texts throughout Jewish history have shaped the erotic, perhaps a history of Eros and the Jews may take its place as one more text seeking to understand, define, and, perhaps, even contribute to creating Jewish desire. □

Special Focus

(Continued from p. 55)

Another circle was now complete: Just as the Inquisition's tentacles caught up with the *conversos* who fled to Mexico, Central America, and Peru, so the patriarch's curse pursued three generations of Pereras in the New World.

Viewed with the hindsight of history, the New World has proven generous to its conquerors beyond Columbus's wildest dreams. The caches of gold and precious stones from Peru and Mexico were only the tip of the cornucopia. America provided the Old World with corn, potatoes, chili peppers, tomatoes, cacao—among other foodstuffs and spices that have immeasurably enriched and transformed European and Asian cultures. Tobacco, another American plant introduced in Europe, has become a scourge only recently, due to its large-scale commercialization and abuse. Among indigenous cultures, tobacco remains a sacred substance, employed in moderation as an offering to their gods.

In return for these boons, Europe's gifts to Native Americans went far beyond Christianity and the horse or the later benisons of rice and wheat; they included smallpox, measles, mumps, yellow fever, influenza, and scores of other plagues and diseases unknown to the New World that wiped out nearly ninety percent of the conquered populations in less than a century. Most

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of the survivors were either sold into slavery or pressed into armies of peons to work the Spaniards' huge haciendas of indigo, cacao, and cochineal. And that was only the beginning.

Columbus's heirs have refined his penchant for domination by guile, religious conversion, and brute force. In the last three decades, approximately 100,000 descendants of the Mayas have been exterminated by Guatemala's military. In El Salvador, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, and other Latin American countries with bloody histories of military dictatorship, the *mestizo* army castes and the *criollo* oligarchies they serve have all proven to be worthy successors of the Conquistadors who followed in Columbus's wake.

Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated for conceiving of a universal God who lives in everything, whose essential nature has none of the patriarchal rigor and cruelty of *Yahweh* as perceived by the fugitive Iberian Marranos, and whose ultimate arbiter is the human intellect rather than Holy Writ. This concept understandably frightened the newly reclaimed Jews of Amsterdam, who had desperate need to uphold an authority greater than that of the Holy Office that had persecuted and burned their fellow Marranos.

Spinoza's ideas were far closer in spirit to those of my Mayan nanny than they were to those of my distant cousin Abraham Israel Pereira or my great grandfather Yitzhak Moshe, who endeavored to replace the intolerant orthodoxy of the Holy Office with the inherited orthodoxy of Scripture and Divine Revelation.

In the 1660s, Abraham Israel Pereira became a follower of the false Messiah Sabbatai Zevi. In his late sixties he set out to meet with Zevi in Jerusalem, where they would rebuild Solomon's Temple and await the Messiah's arrival. But Zevi converted to Islam and was exposed as a fraud before Abraham Pereira set foot in Eretz Yisrael. He returned to Holland profoundly disillusioned. Pereira died in Amsterdam in 1699, an embittered nonagenarian surrounded by honors and grandchildren.

On the eve of World War I, Yitzhak Moshe Pereira wrote his harsh, unforgiving testament in Jerusalem. Three decades later the Nazis annihilated the proud Sephardi community of Salonika. For all his passionate attachment to Kabbalah and to the Laws of his ancestors, my great grandfather, like Abraham Pereira before him, died unfulfilled. Far from participating in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, he nearly lived to see the supplanting of one intolerant orthodoxy by another. □

EXPULSION

(Continued from p. 57)

TIKKUN has always rejected the "America-can-do-no-good" ethos that predominates in some sectors of the Left. Through the struggles of millions of working men and women, the United States that eventually emerged on this continent that Columbus opened to West European settlement became a beacon of hope to the world, a place in which civil liberties were taken seriously. Jews are particularly grateful for the refuge this society provided, as well as for the opportunity to join with other Americans in the struggle to force ruling elites to live up to the high-minded promises of American ideology. But when thinking about the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage, we are also mindful of the painful aspects of what that "discovery" meant for the peoples living here.

So, for many progressive Jews, the 500th anniversary of 1492 is an occasion for mourning—for the Jews and all that happened to us, for tens of millions of Native Americans (both North and South) and African Americans who were victims of European brutality, and for all who continue to suffer from the historical legacy of hundreds of years of European arrogance. □



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Join a gathering of progressive Jews from colleges and graduate schools—and anyone under 30 involved in social change—to discuss an agenda for progressives in light of the outcome of the November election in the U.S. and the recent victory of the Labor Party in Israel. Topics of discussion will include:

- **Black-Jewish Tensions**
- **Anti-Semitism in Progressive Social Change Movements and on College Campuses**
- **The Politics of Meaning in a Clinton administration (Yes, we're anticipating.)**
- **Israel and the Palestinians: Is "Autonomy" Enough?**
- **And including a keynote address from Michael Lerner on Jewish Liberation Theology and its Relevance for Contemporary Progressive Politics.**

This is a perfect opportunity to meet other Jews who share your values and interests. It will be fun, intellectually stimulating, and politically meaningful. Spread the word!

Registration: West Coast. Send $25 to Tikkun, 5100 Leona St, Oakland, Ca. 94619. East Coast: Send $55 (includes some Shabbat meals) to Tikkun, P.O.Box 1778, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025. A limited number of scholarships for those in financial need are available. Write us about your situation.

The Socialism of Fools

Anti-Semitism on the Left

by Michael Lerner

Criticism of Israel or of the Jewish establishment is not automatically anti-Semitic. But there is anti-Semitism on the Left, and even though Jews are sometimes falsely accused of being self-hating, there really are self-hating Jews. Liberal and progressive movements have as much obligation to deal with anti-Semitism as they do to fight other forms of racism. Though the real danger of anti-Semitism comes from the Right, the inexcusable insensitivity to Jewish concerns inside some liberal and progressive social-change movements is documented in this 150-page book.

The Left has a sordid history of anti-Semitism, and this book is a guide on how to recognize and fight it without abandoning support for progressive social change. Perfect for college students and college social-change activists.

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